

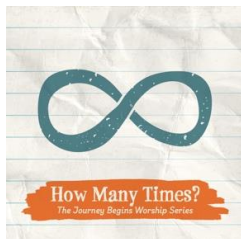
Prairieland Parish

As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.
May we together experience the presence of God

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord

Prelude. - Welcome. - Announcements – Joys/Concerns



Today we take a look at Peter’s question. “How many times must we forgive?” This is one of those questions that we know how we’re supposed to answer, but it is harder to do in practice than in theory. Today we gather to hear the story from Matthew where Jesus tells Peter that we forgive 77 times, or 70 times 7, or in fact, we just keep forgiving, this is a familiar text for many of us and each time we hear it we smile and nod and clap our hands. “Of course,” we think, “we worship a forgiving God, and we know we need God’s forgiveness over and over again.” But then we realize that this means we also must be forgiving of those who offend us, again and again, perhaps. And then we wonder if that’s even possible.

Folks, for the most part we aren’t living in forgiving times. Even a slight glance at the news will tell us that. We live in an atmosphere that is divided into us and them and with that mindset forgiveness rarely enters the conversation.

But the good news is that we have the power to be bring forgiveness back into circulation. We can give space to re-focusing on the importance of accepting and offering forgiveness. We are called to be the leaders in our community who are living examples of this forgiveness thing and how the personal impact this grace will have on us and those around us? It is time we find our way back to forgiveness and we are the ones who must take the time to plant some seeds; And most importantly, perhaps, we can create opportunities for the Spirit to work in us and on us as we walk through our days.

We begin today by hearing Jesus’s response to Peter while those emotions are still fresh within us. As we do let us be honest with ourselves and with God and be open to acknowledge that we too often have asked that same question, “How many times must I forgive?”

A Call to Worship

Children of God, when we face strife, upset, and harm in our midst, we so often turn to God and ask:

How many times should I forgive?

When Jesus answers that we should forgive again and again and again, we are tempted to repeat the question:

How many times should I forgive?

Until God turns the question around: "How many times have I forgiven you?"

Seventy times seven.

"How many times have I loved you?"

Seventy times seven.

"How many times has my grace been sufficient for you?"

Seventy times seven.

Let us learn, then, how to forgive not out of our own power, but out of God's, who forgives us that we might be free to learn to live with one another well.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Loving God, we confess that we struggle to forgive, and we struggle to create space for forgiveness to happen. We rush ourselves to excuse the harmful speech and actions of others as a way of suppressing instead of honestly naming the hurt we have experienced. We expect others to pardon our faults without also attending to our own need to repent. We demand forgiveness from others instead of recognizing forgiveness as a gift we give to one another and that we receive from you. We wield forgiveness as a weapon instead of a bridge that brings us back together. Forgive us, we pray, and free us to joyfully extend mercy and grace to one another, to set and respect boundaries with one another, and to receive from you the love and wisdom we need to grow as the community of Christ. Amen.

Praise Hymn UMH #389 "Freely, Freely"

Author: Carol Owens

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**God forgave my sin in Jesus' name
I've been born again in Jesus' name
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His love as He told me to**

**He said, "Freely, freely you have received
Freely, freely give
Go in my name, and because you believe
Others will know that I live"**

**All power is givin' in Jesus' name
In earth and Heaven in Jesus' name
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His power as He told me to**

**He said, "Freely, freely you have received
Freely, freely give
Go in my name, and because you believe
Others will know that I live"**

Gospel Reading..... Matthew 18:21-35 (NRSV)

Forgiveness

²¹Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven^[a] times.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²³"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

This is the Word of God, for the people of God, **Thanks be to God!**

Children's Sermon

(In lieu of a children's sermon the following churches will be presenting bibles to our 3rd graders – Racine, Sumner Center, Dexter maybe, Grand Meadow, Brownsdale)

AN ORDER FOR THE PRESENTATION OF BIBLES TO CHILDREN

Invite 3rd graders to come forward and share with them the following scripture.

Luke 2:41-52

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents^[a] saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." 49 He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"^[b] 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years,^[c] and in divine and human favor.

(Childs Name) - Receive the Word of God.
Learn its stories and study its words.
Its stories belong to us all,
and these words speak to us all.
They tell us who we are.
They tell us that we belong to one another,
for we are the people of God.

Children respond: (have child repeat after you)

I will receive this Bible with my hands, my hearts, and my mind.
I will read and study the Bible together with my family.

(Address congregation)

Will you as a congregation, rejoice in this step (name of children) journey with God.
Will you pray that God guide them, their family, and all of us
as they use this Holy Bible in their home,
in their church school classes, and in our worship.
We will commit to learn together and grow in our love for God's Word.
If so say, we will

For - The Word of God is a lamp to our feet,
and a light to our path.
Thanks be to God.

Faith Hymn UMH #176 "Majesty, worship his majesty"

Author: Jack Hayford (1981)

Publication Date: 1989

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**Majesty, Worship His Majesty
Unto Jesus Be Glory Honour And Praise
Majesty, Kingdom, Authority
Flows From His Throne
Unto His Own
His Anthem Raise**

**So Exalt, Lift Upon High
The Name Of Jesus
Magnify Come Glorify
Christ, Jesus The King**

**Majesty, Worship His Majesty
Jesus Who Died, Now Glorified
King Of All Kings.
Jesus Who Died, Now Glorified
King Of All Kings.**

Message

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We give you thanks, O Lord, as we call on your name.

We sing praises to you; we tell of all your wonderful works. We glory in your holy name; let the hearts of those who seek you rejoice.

Lord, we seek your strength and your presence continually. We remember the wonderful works you have done, your miracles, and the judgments you uttered.

You are the Lord our God

We come before you this day asking for your guidance that will bring us to live our days with forgiveness and acceptance in our hearts. Oh, how our hearts struggle to forgive wholly and fully.

We thank You for demonstrating such forgiveness by graciously extending it to us. Help us forgive freely and let go of bitterness and grant us the strength to trust Your way is best.

This truth we know but struggle to find our way to be living examples of your Son who taught us to pray, Our Father...

Offertory/Doxology

Offertory Prayer

Generous God, you have given so much to us in love and joy – every good thing in our life reflects your caring. Even in the giving of our offerings, we have tried to give our best but know we could do more. In a world where forgiveness has become a rare commodity, it is often an asset we hold back to maintain power over one another. Help us to hear the teaching of Jesus in the generosity of forgiveness. May we learn to give that to others with wild extravagance! We pray in Christ's name, who gave all. Amen. ([Matt 18:21-35](#))

Departing Hymn UMH #127 “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”

Author: William Williams (1745)

Translator: Peter Williams (1771)

Publication Date: 1989

**1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more;
feed me till I want no more.**

**2. Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,**

**be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.**

**3. When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.**

SENDING FORTH

May you go from this place with a posture of forgiveness, leading and being led by the grace that saves us into right relationship with God, neighbor, self, and creation. Amen.

Postlude