



5<sup>th</sup> October 2025

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

*Forgive each other – 70 x 7 times*

## *The Power of Forgiveness*

I enjoyed Rev' Mel's story at the beginning of her message last week, remember the Minister who was starting at a new church and he turned up before the service as a homeless person in rags with a can of beer, slumped on the church steps. I can just imagine the scene unfolding as the parishioners arrived for the Sunday morning service. I think we might do a little better!!

It reminded me of dinner church the week before, a young man came in off the street, he just saw the sign and came in. Mel and I had read this story before, and there are similar stories around as well, so we were all over this young person!!!! We welcomed him warmly and after a brief chat we offered him a food parcel, which he thankfully accepted and we introduced him to others so he wasn't alone at the table.

It doesn't matter if we don't see him again, he experienced some kindness, a hot dinner and friendship that evening in a safe place.

We never know who we are entertaining or welcoming in this place, it seems to me that we are a place of welcome. It doesn't matter if people visit once or one hundred times the welcome is always the same. I see it often, last Sunday for example; I also see the office staff and volunteers, both Boutique and Bazaar staff are welcoming and support all those who enter this place, it's wonderful. A big pat on the back to all, thank you.

As we reflect on the Gospel reading this morning, we note that Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is almost at an end and Jesus continues to instruct his disciples on various topics, now with a sense of urgency. He occasionally turns aside to speak with his opponents as well. We see the content of his teachings are very different now, not so much conversion stories, but teachings directed by the growing sense of crisis as the path to Jerusalem shortens. Jesus does not conceal the fact that it will be a crisis for his disciples and his opponents, as well as himself of course, once He arrives in Jerusalem.

Jesus talks about ongoing life in the community of faith. He particularly addresses community leaders, there are severe warnings about providing occasion for "little ones" to stumble. Little ones meaning those who are vulnerable in their faith, including children and new believers of any age.

And to stumble, meaning fall away from their faith, or turn away from Jesus. We find a serious condemnation of anyone, especially those in positions of leadership, who by their harmful example, actions or words, cause these vulnerable individuals to lose their trust in Christ or to turn away from him.

Jesus, knowing that there will inevitably be instances of misbehaviour and injury, gives instruction for correction and reconciliation that must be put in place. When the offender repents, forgiveness must be ample and overflowing; even though the pattern may be repeated several times.

The disciples understand this demanding teaching and ask Jesus to increase their faith, to which he replies, not implying that the disciples have no faith, but that the little faith they have, the size of a mustard seed, is enough to work outstanding miracles if only they exploit it to the full. To take our faith seriously is to clothe ourselves with the power of God.

So how do we apply these teachings of Jesus to our own lives in our own communities. What do they mean for us here and now.

I guess forgiveness is always a hard one, that is the very reason that Jesus' disciples asked for their faith to be increased. So often we hear, "I can never forgive what was said or done to me" and, we all agree it is extremely difficult.

By forgiving someone it does take a burden from us as we place it at the cross. It doesn't mean that we entirely forget it, although Jesus does erase our sins when we truly repent. It also doesn't mean that we need to be friends with them as well; although Jesus was.....the thing is we are human and Jesus is divine. However we do need to try and forgive others and be kind to all people, because we are followers of Jesus, walking in his footsteps and following his teachings.

How do we manage to come to terms with some of our prominent world leaders as the world is in such a grim state? How do we forgive them and how do we forgive those who have hurt us or our loved ones?

Pray about it, listen to the small still voice of Jesus, he will lead and guide us if we genuinely seek him, small steps at a time, until we find the freedom he offers us. It also helps to talk to a trusted friend, to speak it, to hear it and move closer to a solution.

As we look at the final warning from Jesus, it rests on an image from the everyday practice of slavery, which was normal in those days. Jesus using this image is a little daunting for us as well as the actual content of what is said. Does God really regard us as "worthless slaves", who deserve no gratitude at all? Once again Jesus is making a point from an aspect of life familiar to his audience without necessarily approving or disapproving the practice itself. We ought not press too much out of the image in a moralising kind of way. The point is simply that community leaders should not think that they have the right to rewards or are entitled in any way because of their office or status. To serve others in God's name is indeed a privilege; it requires no further reward.

So my friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, let us gather up the scripture that we have heard today, the praises that we have sung to our Lord and take all that has touched our hearts this morning and live this out among our families, our friends and all those we meet today. May all those we have contact with see the love of Jesus shining as warmly as the SONSHINE that surrounds us.

Amen