

The 16th Sunday after Pentecost
“How Jesus’ heavenly Father treats you”
Matthew 18:33-35
September 13, 2026
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 16th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 18:35.

“33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?” 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

So far our text:

It’s amazing how our Lord has created our bodies with a circulatory system of blood that continuously provides all that we need to function and live - delivering oxygen, nutrients, cleaning up the system of what we don’t need. It’s working 24/7 without our telling it to do so. We learn how to give CPR when something happens that the heart doesn’t pump the blood through our system like it should.

Friends in Christ, the forgiveness of sins delivered by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, is the very lifeblood that circulates in the hearts of every believer in Jesus. Without the receiving of Jesus’ forgiveness, there is no life. The soul is dead.

But with the receiving of forgiveness the soul lives and has its being. Forgiveness needs to continually flow in the heart of a believer to live. And so we see how forceful and adamant Jesus is when He speaks about forgiveness. It’s non- negotiable. You must forgive the trespass of a brother or sister from the heart. Each of you. Jesus is speaking directly to each of us.

This is not up for debate whether I should forgive my brother who repents 6 or 7 or 8 times. Jesus says that forgiveness must be given without limit. For if it is stopped the soul goes into cardiac arrest and the soul’s circulatory system of life stops.

So important is this, that Jesus just gave to His church the gift of the Office of the Keys that we heard in the preceding verses of Matthew 18 last week.

“18 “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

And Jesus wants us to use this key that opens or closes heaven by the giving of forgiveness, the loosing of sins or the binding of forgiveness, the retaining of sins, until there is repentance, and forgiveness can and should be given!

Having just told this to His disciples, Peter asks the question about how many times he should forgive and use the Office of the Keys. Did you not just hear that **“it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”** The one lost sheep is so important. It needs to be rebuked and receive forgiveness for straying. That’s the church’s work – circulate forgiveness.

To drive this home, Jesus gives the parable of the unforgiving servant. He had a huge amount of debt. There was no way he could ever repay it. He was bankrupt. Time to sell off any assets to recover what could be recovered – sell him, his wife and children as slaves! He fell on his knees and begged for patience, saying that he just needed more time to pay it off, which was impossible. So the master did the impossible. He had compassion and forgave him his debt completely.

And this is what the whole Bible is about – the impossible done by Jesus Christ for the world. For God to forgive the sins of the world, there was a cost. He had compassion on us by exacting the price of our debt on His Son.

So Paul tells the people in Antioch about who Jesus is and what He did.

“I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.’ 23 From this man’s seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—...38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13:22-23, 38-39)

And Paul wrote to the Ephesians and described how we have forgiveness of sins.

“3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,... 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:3,7)

Again in Colossians we hear:

“13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14)

For the circulatory system of the soul to work it needs the lifeblood of Jesus circulating in it. It is through His blood alone that there is forgiveness. As we hear in Hebrews 9:

“without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness...now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Hebrews 9:22,26)

Who are we therefore to not forgive what God has commanded us to forgive? What did Joseph say when his brothers feared that when Jacob died he would not forgive them?

“Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?”

So Jesus says to each of us Luke 17:

“3 Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.” (Luke 17:3-4)

Jesus doesn't say you may or may not forgive him. You shall forgive him. You must forgive him. Otherwise you make yourself into a god. And the punishment of the unforgiving servant will also come upon us.

34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

Jesus' forgiveness is the very life-blood of the Church.

“8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8,9)

It is so important that Jesus instituted two sacraments to give us this very forgiveness.

Sacraments: We discussed in the Bible class last week that a sacrament is defined by three marks: It was instituted by Christ. It contains a visible element. And it gives forgiveness of sins. With this definition there are two sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

“38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

“27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:27-28)

How important is forgiveness? We remember how this is what Jesus first gave the paralytic man before He healed him.

“20 When He saw their faith, He said to him, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.”

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’? 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”(Luke 5:20-24)

So, we also, forgiven believers in Christ, arise daily with His remission of sins flowing through our spiritual hearts and giving us joy, peace, salvation and life. And we arise daily with this gift to give to each other, forgiveness without limit, love without limit, for it is by this grace alone that we live. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)