

A Reasonable Question
Matthew 18:21–35
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Forgiveness is easy to talk about but hard to practice.

We know what we should do, but do we live that way?

This is a critical topic for us today.

Today's Gospel teaches about forgiveness.

It immediately follows last Sunday's Gospel, and helps connect that teaching to us.

Matthew 18:15–18 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven...."

In this morning's Gospel, Peter asks a reasonable follow-up question:

How often should I forgive my brother? Is 7 times enough (v. 21)?

It's easy for us to criticize Peter, but how do we respond?

Jesus' response: "I do not say to you seven times but seventy-seven times" (v. 22)

That is not a call to keep count, but a call to give up counting.

Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

We forgive because we have been forgiven

And even when we fail to forgive, God still forgives us.

Jesus lovingly demonstrates why Peter's question (and our questions) fail to recognize what we have been received.

Imagine a man who owed his master \$3.5 million dollars! He begged for mercy since he could never pay such a great amount and his debt was forgiven.

Now imagine that same man then tracked down a friend who owed him \$6,600.

That's serious money for a worker, but what kind of a person would not "pay it forward"?

How often should God forgive those who sin against Him?

How often has mankind sinned? One sin was damning, but we've sinned countless times.

Can you even count your own sins?

The forgiveness is endless, and to us, it is free. But it came at great cost: death by crucifixion

And even then, He said, "Father forgive them..."

God forgives without limits and without counting.

"as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us." (Ps 103:12)

For Christ's sake, He forgives.

Today He calls us, who have been forgiven, to be little Christs

Not to keep score (He doesn't)

Not to excuse sin (He doesn't)

He calls us to receive His grace and to share that grace.