

Pentecost 20 – October 2, 2016
Text: Luke 17:1-10
Theme: "But I Don't Wanna Forgive!"

I will admit that I quickly lose patience with unforgiving people, but so does God so at least I am in good company. What makes any human being think for a minute that he has the right to refuse to forgive? I am dumbstruck when a person looks me in the eye and says, "I will never forgive that person." What am I to say? "Okay then. Here's a millstone. Hang it around your neck and jump into Lake Michigan. See Ya!" Let me say it as plainly as I can.

We have no option but to forgive. I don't care what heinous thing someone has done to you. Your only option is to forgive and if you do not choose that option you're are living completely outside of a relationship with God. You can overcome being a debaucherous pornography consuming lie in the gutter drunk who cheats on your spouse and gambles away your kid's college fund. All of that can be forgiven. But refusing to forgive another human being will eventually drive you away from Christ and kill your faith. Hence the millstone. Just kill yourself now because there is no hope for one who refuses to forgive.

I understand that it is not easy to forgive, especially when we have been hurt badly. I understand it takes time to forgive. We all

need some time and distance to gain perspective. We all struggle to forgive but struggling and refusing are two wholly different things. I can only imagine that people who refuse to forgive must whole-heartedly believe that they are the center of the universe. They are so consumed with themselves and their hurt and their feelings that they are blinded to their own sin. God has sent his only son to die on the cross and suffer Hell in your place so that he could forgive you. How dare you refuse to forgive someone else for a tiny fraction of hurt compared to the hurt you have caused God?

That is exactly why the disciples reacted the way they did when Jesus told them,

“Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” They replied,

“Increase our faith!” They heard his word rightly as one of the most difficult of all of Jesus’ demands. Our puffed up pride wants us to be right all the time and by withholding forgiveness, we cling on to that prideful belief in our own rightness. Never mind the many more times we have been wrong. We bask in the glory of being right for as long as we can. And if there is any doubt of our rightness, we wallow in the pity from everyone we tell about the

horrible wrong done to us. We love all the attention from sympathizers who stroke our ego with kind words and consolations in our time of pain – which we prolong by refusing to forgive AND MOVE ON.

We are like the prophet Habakkuk, in our Old Testament reading. He wanted vindication from God right now! Punish those evil doers God! But we aren't always like Habakkuk in that he was willing to accept the answer God gave. God said wait. He will take care of all evil when it is time and in the meantime, focus on your own unrighteousness.

“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.” Our job is to faithfully forgive. That’s how the righteous live. God will handle the evil doers so don’t let your soul get puffed up.

Today God gives you his answer to all of your broken relationships. There’s the millstone. There’s forgiveness. Choose. The disciples didn’t like that answer so they begged him to increase their faith. So he sent his Holy Spirit to do just that. It amuses me that people who were wronged and are refusing to forgive, often drop out of worship. They do not want God’s help to forgive because their soul is puffed up. We know that his Word and the very body and blood of Christ will forgive us and move us

to forgiveness of others. But, if we forgive, we can no longer be the hurt victim for everyone to faun over! See, forgiveness takes the attention off of us and we don't like that.

But, that is what we do. We hear God's Word. We consume his body and blood and we forgive. That is how the righteous live. We hear forgiveness from our God. We eat and drink forgiveness from our God. And we become fountains of forgiveness for one another and for the unbelieving world.