

realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



In today's readings:

Resentment has no place in your heart.
Sirach 27:30-28:7
We belong to Christ. Rom 14:7-9
Forgive each other, deeply and often. Mt 18:21-35

Next week:

Workers in the vineyard.
Is 55:6-9; Phil 1:20-24,27;
Mt 20:1-16.

In a nutshell

Today's parable speaks of God's unconditional love and mercy. God forgives us totally and wants only to embrace us in love and freedom. What then should be our response to those who have hurt us? May we be generous in our forgiveness, offering to others the love we enjoy. As often as there is hurt, we need to be reconciled.



Amidst the complexities of family life it can be difficult to forgive hurts. And yet, if we don't forgive we stay trapped in our pain. A reader shares this insight:

Jesus longs to free us

I was the eldest. The words ring out from the past. 'Let her have it. You're older.' I would feel uncomfortable, but for my parents' sake, I would give in to my sister and let her have it. Now, many years later, I am still letting her have it, silently wincing and getting on with keeping the peace.

Then one day I began to receive more intimate letters from her. I found it difficult to respond. I was comfortable doing my duty, but now she wanted love. She demanded I respond more affectionately. I was ready. I had always hungered for a meaningful relationship with her. I opened my heart, but there was no love, just waves of repressed grief.

I said, 'I feel much pain, I am hurting.' All I wanted was a consoling word, just an acknowledgment that I ached, and all the past would have been

joyfully washed away. Instead a torrent of abuse came from the other end. 'Do you always have to bring up the past? When will you forget?' I wanted to take my heart inside and bolt the door. My pain was ignored.

How could I cancel the 'debt' if it was not acknowledged?

Out of my pain, I began to understand indigenous reconciliation. Past generations of Aborigines have died, but for the next generation the pain is still unresolved. What a compliment to us when they say, 'We ache.' If we say, 'Yes, you ache, we're sorry', it will wipe away infinite debts and free their hearts to love us.

Reconciliation is not about apportioning blame, it is about acknowledging the painful debts that block our love. It is about freeing us to love each other. (Susan. 1999)

Share something of your own struggle to forgive and be forgiven.

Life lessons

We were at the home of a young family and joined in their family prayer time. The three children led the way with 'thank you' prayers and 'sorry' prayers, although seven year old Steven said he didn't have any 'sorry' prayers. A few moments later, after he had pushed his younger brother off the chair, it was gently suggested to him that perhaps he had a 'sorry' prayer to say now. The whole scene was a delight to behold; such a natural way to teach forgiveness and instill Christian values in the home. (R&M)



church below the rooftops

Life lessons

'One of the best lessons I ever learned from my parents is that marriage is not about "fairness" or 50/50 give and take. It's about giving of yourself one hundred percent.' (Louise)

'Don't burn your bridges' was one of Dad's constant themes in relation to family conflict. In other words, no matter how volatile the argument, don't do or say anything that makes reconciliation impossible in the future.' (Robert)

Think . Talk . Act

- When it comes to unconditional loving, what is one of the best lessons or pieces of advice you have been given?
- Is there someone you think you have forgiven, but in fact you haven't?
- Name one of the most forgiving people you know. Ask this person to share with you how he/she has come to be so forgiving. What insight can you apply to your own life?



RealPeople offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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