



DAILY BREAD
LECTIONARY DEVOTIONS
PENTECOST 17 — YEAR A

INVOCATION

L: In the name of the Father
and of the Son +
and of the Holy Spirit.

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 103

**A: I will hear what the Lord proclaims:
peace to his people.**

L: Praise the LORD, O my soul;

G: all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

L: He forgives all your sins

G: and heals all your diseases;

L: he redeems your life from the grave

G: and crowns you with love and compassion.

L: The LORD is compassionate and gracious,

G: slow to anger, abounding in love.

L: He does not treat us as our sins deserve

G: or repay us according to our iniquities.

L: For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

G: so great is his love for those who fear him;

L: as far as the east is from the west,

**G: so far has he removed our transgressions
from us.**

L: As a father has compassion on his children,

**G: so the LORD has compassion on those who
fear him;**

L: for he knows how we are formed,

G: he remembers that we are dust.

L: Our days are like grass, like a flower of the field;

G: the wind blows over it and it is gone.

L: But the LORD'S love is with those who fear him

G: from everlasting to everlasting.

**A: I will hear what the Lord proclaims:
peace to his people.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Lord, we pray that your mercy and grace may always go before and follow after us that, loving you with undivided hearts, we may be ready for every good and useful work; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION *see next page*

PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

**A: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

VERSE OF THE DAY

**A: Everything that was written in the past
was written to teach us, so that through
endurance and the encouragement of the
Scriptures we might have hope.
(Romans 15:4)**

BENEDICTION

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

A: Amen

READING AND MEDITATION:

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost: The Church forgives as God forgives. Anytime we try to imitate God, we quickly realize our inadequacy. Yet today God tells us to model our forgiveness on his: a boundless, free, and loving forgiveness based on the sacrifice of Christ. How could our sinful hearts ever forgive like that? The Prayer of the Day asks that the mercy and grace of God precede us and follow after us, that we might love God with undivided hearts— hearts always ready to forgive as God does: sins are forgiven, forgotten, forever.

As you study this week, seek to find the connecting theme in all the lessons by using Luther's Four Big Barber Questions to ponder and discuss each individual reading:

1. *What is God saying to me in this lesson?*
2. *For what does this lesson lead me to give thanks?*
3. *What sins does this lesson lead me to confess?*
4. *For what does this lesson lead me to pray?*

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18:21-35

"The human animal is not...good at forgiveness. Forgiveness is not some innate, natural human emotion. It is natural for the human animal to defend itself, to snarl and crouch into a defensive position when attacked, to howl when wronged, to bite back when bitten. Forgiveness is not natural." (Willimon) Forgiveness must be learned, and Peter thought he had figured it out. From the elders of the Jews Peter had heard: "If a man transgresses one time, forgive him. If a man transgresses two times, forgive him. If a man transgresses three times, forgive him. If a man transgresses four times, do not forgive him." Three times, the elders said, was the limit of forgiveness for a good Jew. Peter, however, was willing to go much further; not three times, but seven times, Peter thought with a smile. Until Jesus said, "Not seven times, Peter, seventy times seven— what the elders say doesn't matter. *I say to you* that your forgiveness should have no limit, but be like God's." Jesus' parable contrasts the forgiveness of God and our own unforgiving nature. The servant's debt— by any measure of calculation—was impossibly high (perhaps 150,000 years' wages). Who could have accrued debt such as this? Who could ever hope to repay? What an arresting picture of our debt of sin before God! The greatness of the debt magnifies the compassion of the king who wipes the debt away. Who can comprehend the forgiveness of God? Certainly not unmerciful

servants like us, who refuse to forgive the small debts owed to us, and instead, inflict on our fellow servants the punishments that God should rightly have given us. Have mercy on us, Lord, and teach us to forgive like you!

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 50:15-21

How hard it is to forgive like God! We may forgive someone who hurts us, but we never forget. We harbor that hurt deep inside of us for years—never understanding that we are locking ourselves in the prison of the past. Joseph's brothers feared that they would finally have to pay for what they did to Joseph. His father was gone; he was still in charge in Egypt; and the brothers thought that they were going to face Joseph's vengeance. As repentant sinners, we often act like the brothers and wait for God to get even with us for our past sins. Shame on us! We are making God as shallow as we are! In God's eyes our sins are forgiven, forgotten, forever. Joseph wept at their words as he remembered the sordid history and all the emotions that came with it. He wept, but he was free from the prison of the past; he had forgiven his brothers their terrible deeds. Through his tears, Joseph never wavered, but he calmed his brothers' fears, forgave them like God forgives, and set them free from their prison of the past.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 14:5-9

This is the last in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Christ set us free from the burdens of the Law; in the Gospel we have the freedom of sons. With freedom, though, comes responsibility. Our Christian freedom must be normed by love for our neighbor. I am certainly free to eat or drink, but my eating and drinking doesn't happen in a vacuum. My Christian freedom is not freedom to enslave a weaker brother's conscience. We are bound to our brothers because we both belong to Christ. Therefore let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (v.19). Restricting my freedom out of love for my brother is service to Christ that pleases God and brings righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (v. 17).

My takeaways:

What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 4:29—5:2

Paul commands us not to act like the unmerciful servant, but rather: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." The Church is comprised of people who have been sealed for redemption, so let's act like it! Not only kindness and compassion, but forgiveness is the primary mark of the Christian. We forgive because God forgave us in Christ. That makes us μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, imitators of God. Every Old Testament sacrificial victim pointed ahead to the death of Christ, the fragrant offering and the atoning sacrifice that won our forgiveness and inspires our forgiveness for others.

My takeaways: