



SUNDAY, AUGUST 28 - REFLECTION & RESPONSE GUIDE

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35 (The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant)

- ***What response does the parable of the unmerciful servant evoke in you (questions, emotions, ideas, etc)? Why do you think this is?***
- ***In what ways have you experienced mercy in your life?***
- ***How might God be inviting you today to be a vessel of his mercy?***

"For us humans, forgiveness does not erase the past. Rather, it opens up a new future by blocking the past from poisoning that future." – Philip Yancey

- ***Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?***
- ***Reflecting on your own story, how has forgiving someone lead you onto a path that otherwise wouldn't have been available for you?***
- ***How can forgiveness bring a new, preferred future even without repentance and reconciliation?***

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors ..." (Matthew 5:12)

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 5:14-15)

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone ..." (Romans 12:18)

- ***Is it harder for you to receive forgiveness or to give forgiveness? Why might that be?***
- ***Consider the circumstances in your life where there is unresolved hurt, conflict, or debts: what could it look like for you to "live at peace with everyone"?***

LITANY FOR RECONCILIATION, CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In preparation for communion, read this prayer aloud as a discussion group (have one person lead and the others response)

To you, God, we turn to have our hearts filled with love.

Give us new wine skins and fill them with new wine.

We remember that your forgiveness is for all people, and that the blood of Christ was shed for all:

For the accepted and for the marginalized

For the poor and the wealthy

For the weak and the powerful

For the ill and the healthy

For the simple and the nuanced

We remember that forgiveness is not contingent on the nature of sin
Hallelujah.

We confess our tendency to think we are better than others.

We confess our pride in minimizing our own sins.

We confess our being blindly certain of our limited understanding.

We confess our snatching the right to judge out of the hand of Jesus, whom we say we trust.

We confess our letting go of our God-given right: to love our neighbour.

We confess our worship of our own ideas about Jesus, rather than the actual Person of Jesus.

It is to that Person that we cry now:

Have mercy on us according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion.

Blot out all our iniquity and lead us in the way everlasting.

Amen.

Adapted from: www.franpratt.com/litanies/2015/12/15/for-reconciliation-confession-and-forgiveness

COMMUNION AS DISCUSSION GROUPS

- Fill glasses for each person in your circle and pass around the bread
- Leave a few moments for quiet contemplation and private prayer
- Have one person read from the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; below) pausing to eat and drink

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'" *(pause and eat together)*

"Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

(pause and drink together)

As a way to close our time, take 15-20 minutes to share about how God has been at work in your life. Share stories, successes or struggles you are living and then take some time to pray for one another.