



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11–17

TIME AFTER PENTECOST — LECTIONARY 24

FIRST READING: Genesis 50:15-21

A reading from Genesis.

¹⁵Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said,
"What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us
and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?"

¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying,
"Your father gave this instruction before he died,

¹⁷"Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers
and the wrong they did in harming you.'
Now therefore please forgive the crime
of the servants of the God of your father."

Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said,
"We are here as your slaves."

¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid!

Am I in the place of God?

²⁰Even though you intended to do harm to me,
God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people,
as he is doing today.

²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones."
In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

PSALMODY: Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13

FIRST READING

The mercy of God is evident in Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers. They had sold him into slavery (and would have left him for dead in the wilderness!), but God had spared and blessed Joseph beyond imagining. At the death of their father, the brothers fear retribution. The point of the text is to be found in Joseph's rhetorical question, "Am I in the place of God?" In fact, Joseph shows his brothers mercy and pity not unlike that of God. The reading sounds compassionate.

SECOND READING: Romans 14:1-12

A reading from Romans.

- ¹Welcome those who are weak in faith
but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.
²Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.
³Those who eat must not despise those who abstain,
and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat,
for God has welcomed them.
⁴Who are you to pass judgment on slaves of another?
It is before their own lord that they stand or fall.
And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.
- ⁵Some judge one day to be better than another,
while others judge all days to be alike.
Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.
⁶Those who observe the day, observe it for the Lord.
Also those who eat, eat for the Lord,
since they give thanks to God,
while those who abstain, abstain for the Lord
and give thanks to God.
- ⁷For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.
⁸If we live, we live to the Lord,
and if we die, we die to the Lord;
so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.
⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again,
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.
- ¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?
Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?
For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.
¹¹For it is written,
 "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
 and every tongue shall give praise to God."
¹²So then, each one of us will be held accountable.

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

SECOND READING

A simple point is being made. The author urges members of the community not to pass judgment on one another. That which the faithful choose to do or to abstain from doing is a choice made to honor God. We are urged to honor the choices of those whose decisions differ from our own. It is an important message for the church, then and now. Bring to the reading a sense of urgency, and the faithful in our day will be helped.

GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

²¹Peter came and said to Jesus,

“Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me,
how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”

²²Jesus said to him,

“Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king
who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

²⁴When he began the reckoning,

one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him,

²⁵and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold,
together with his wife and children and all his possessions
and payment to be made.

²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying,

‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’

²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him
and forgave him the debt.

²⁸“But that same slave, as he went out,

came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii,
and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’

²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him,

‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’

³⁰But he refused;

then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.

³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened,

they were greatly distressed,

and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave!

I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’

³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured

until he would pay his entire debt.

³⁵“So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you,
if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL *denarii = den-AR-ee-eye*

This action-packed parable is preceded by Peter’s genuine exploration of magnanimity in forgiveness and Jesus’ startling reply. Pick up the pace for the parabolic illustration. Vary the cadence of the story itself at its unexpected turning points: verse 27 (the slave’s release); verse 30a (the forgiven one’s unwillingness to forgive); and verse 35 (“So my heavenly Father will . . .”). A nuanced reading requires rehearsal (aloud) even for well-known texts.