

**Devotional Reflection, Tuesday, November 19, 2024**  
**Proper 28, the week of the twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.**

**True and False Forgiveness**

**Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:**

***3Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. 4And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, "I repent," you must forgive.' 5The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' 6The Lord replied, 'If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you.***

You will find the full text of today's Gospel reading at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (BCP, 993)

AM Psalm 97, 99, [100]; PM Psalm 94, [95]

Hab. 3:1-10(11-15)16-18; James 3:1-12; Luke 17:1-10

Today we celebrate the Feast of Elizabeth of Hungary. (See below.)

David's Reflections

Jesus' teachings about forgiveness, radical and grace-filled though they be, can be the source of grief and wounding if indiscriminately and literally applied to life situations. Today's Gospel can be cited, for example, to encourage an abused spouse or child to reconcile repeatedly with the abusive spouse or parent. When does forgiveness degenerate into something less, into an action that wounds the forgiving one?

David Augsberger wrote an insightful two-part work on this subject. The first is entitled, *Caring Enough to Forgive* (Baker, 1981); the second, *Caring Enough to Not Forgive* (Baker, 1981). (The second part actually begins with the back cover and reads from the back toward the center of the same book.) In the book on false forgiveness, Augsberger describes several actions that masquerade as forgiveness.

First, the one forgiving does so in a way that puts him or her one up emotionally on the person supposedly forgiven. If the person supposedly forgiven is left feeling emotionally indebted to the forgiver, that inequality means that forgiveness has not happened.

Augsberger also speaks about one-way forgiveness as false. If you are wounded by another's words and those words are unjustly or unfairly spoken, to forgive that person without their knowing that they not only wounded you but also have spoken unjustly and unfairly, would make that forgiveness one way. You may need to forgive that person, but they also need to make amends for their misguided and harsh words.

Augsberger also warns against forgiveness that distorts or denies feelings of anger or wounding because of the demand to forgive. Reconciliation between people cannot happen if the one wounded and injured denies their pain and simply moves on as though the wrong had no been done.

Finally, Augsberger cautions against pronouncing forgiveness before trust is restored and the relationship has been renewed. Love may be genuine between people but the tough work of forgiveness has not been done if vulnerability and trust have not been restored.

My only caveat about Augsberger's insightful work has to do with those occasions when forgiveness does not restore a relationship, like when you are forgiving someone who has died or an abuser with whom you will not continue in a relationship. In those occasions, forgiveness has more to do with your finding freedom than it does with saving or repairing a relationship. To let go of the connection to such a past can be thought of as forgiveness, but it's about your freedom and emotional well being and not about repairing a relationship to a person.

We must listen deeply to Jesus' words in this text. Perhaps the best way to hear them is to avoid forgiving too quickly, to avoid rushing past the tough, painful work of suffering, sharing, and reconciling. If we ground ourselves in God's ongoing forgiveness of us and trust in God's love for courage and strength, we will be able to live into the genuine and repeated forgiveness that God in Christ exemplifies and demands. (See the book by Matthew and Dennis Linn and Sheila F. Linn, *Don't*

*Forgive too Soon* [Paulist Press, 1997] and available at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and Barnes and Noble ([www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)).

*Collect of the Day, Proper 28, the twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost*

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 236)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Elizabeth of Hungary, princess and philanthropist (died 17 Nov 1231 CE).

[http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Elizabeth\\_Hungary.htm](http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Elizabeth_Hungary.htm)

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Elizabeth-of-Hungary>

*Collect of the Feast of Elizabeth of Hungary*

Almighty God, by your grace your servant Elizabeth of Hungary recognized and honored Jesus in the poor of this world: Grant that we, following her example, may with love and gladness serve those in any need or trouble, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*A Collect for Peace*

O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom: Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in your defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 99)

*For Vocation in Daily Work*

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 261)

### *A Prayer for Light*

Grant us, Lord, the lamp of charity which never fails, that it may burn in us and shed its light on those around us, and that by its brightness we may have a vision of that holy City, where dwells the true and never-failing Light, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 110)

### *A Collect for Mission*

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)

### Daily Office Gospel, Luke 17:1-10

17:1 Jesus said to his disciples, 'Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! 2 It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. 4 And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, "I repent," you must forgive.' 5 The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' 6 The Lord replied, 'If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you. 7 "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table"? 8 Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink"? 9 Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!"'

### Daily Prayer Offices in The Book of Common Prayer

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *Book of Common Prayer*

Noonday Prayer, p. 103, *Book of Common Prayer*

Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p. 109, *Book of Common Prayer*

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*

Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*