

September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle A

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Sirach 27:30 – 28:7.

*God remembers our sins in great detail; but chooses to overlook them.*

Psalms 103:1 – 2, 3 – 4, 9 – 10, and 11 – 12.

*God is kind and merciful.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Romans 14:7 – 9.

*No matter what, we are God's children.*

Gospel: Matthew 18:21 – 35.

*God requires an attitude of forgiveness not vengeance, a change of heart.*

Change our hearts Lord

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

The really good news this morning is that I have orders from above to keep it short because we have parish census forms to fill out. With the school year beginning I thought I would be good to give it the old college try.

The first lines from our first reading really speak true to me as a description of our human condition. “wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner holds them tight” and hugs them closely not wanting to let go. This is where we get so enslaved by our own choices. From the moment someone hurts us we begin calculating or planning our vengeance. It really holds us captive, that is why Jesus asks us to change our hearts. Clearly Jesus is sharing a radical message about how true freedom is achieved: through forgiveness.

I know no one did it out loud, (just checking on how many folks think like me) but did anyone cheer when the wicked servant got his due in the Gospel reading? I mean justice is justice, right? Yes it is; but it is not the way of the Gospel. Love is! Change our hearts, Lord.

All of us have heard the expression, “forgive and forget.” I remember listening to a theologian brought here by K College, several years ago now, and having an “oh yeah! Moment.” He said something to the effect that Forgiveness is not about

forgetting: it is about remembering differently. We must change our story. We must be willing to let go of the hurt, the vengeance, and the controls. Pope Francis calls forgiveness a radical action. How radical are we willing to be? Change our hearts, Lord.

As many of you know my youngest brother transitioned to new life on August 30, and we held his funeral memorial last Tuesday in Green Bay. The back of his memorial prayer card had this famous quote from Mother Theresa (it got me thinking about what these readings mean and it was one of Jim's favorites as well) "People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish ulterior motives; Be kind anyway. If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; be honest and frank anyway. What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; Build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; be happy anyway. The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; Give the world the best you've got anyway. You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God; it was never between you and them anyway." Change our hearts Lord.

This is one of God's great gifts to us. I always tell people, "There is nothing you can do, NOTHING that God will not forgive. This is why God lives in complete and full freedom. And God has offered it to us, through God's coming and sharing in our humanity fully yet freely. Eleonore Stump says, "What stands between us and God is our willingness to receive the gift God is offering." Change our hearts Lord.

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