

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2020 - 15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Psalm 103: 1-13 (NRSV)

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

A good prayer for after eating.

²Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—

³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

⁴who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Wouldn't it be great to have your youth renewed like the eagle's?

Which of God's blessings do you most often remember? Which are you most apt to forget?

⁸The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

A light year is how far light travels in a vacuum in a Julian year – about 6 trillion miles.

The nearest known star (other than our own Sun) is 4.22 light years away.

The center of our galaxy, the Milky Way, is about 26,000 light years away.

The Milky Way is about 100,000 light years across.

The distance from the earth to the edge of the visible universe is 45.7 billion light years in any direction.

45.7 billion x 6 trillion miles – that's how great God's steadfast love is towards you.

¹²As far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

On a globe, if you continue going north, you eventually go south. If you continue going south, you eventually go north. But if you go east, and continue going east, you never start going west.

¹³As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.

Genesis 50:15-21 and Matthew 18:21-35 (NRSV)

There is something absolutely amazing going on here. This is the first time in the Bible where there is a healing of a broken relationship through confession, repentance, and the giving of forgiveness.

Judah's offer to stay behind in place of Benjamin is the first time in the Bible where we see a willingness to suffer for someone else to save someone else. For the first time we see that

community can be healed by the act of a person who is willing to suffer the punishment that someone else deserves. And that person is Judah, a biological ancestor of Jesus.

The brothers go back home and tell old Jacob, “Joseph is still alive.” The problem is that in saying that they are going to have to tell their father what they did twenty-two years before.

Reconciliation – restored relationship – is not about avoiding difficult conversations or uncomfortable, unpleasant situations or covering them up. Instead reconciliation – restored relationship – always requires telling the truth.

The miracle of rebuilt trust and community takes truth telling, confession, repentance, and forgiveness. And that is what happens here. After twenty-two years it happens here. For the first time – finally – they are a family.

Where in your life is a relationship that needs reconciliation? Where have you been deeply hurt by someone?

Think about the one who hurt you. You might think, He or she does not deserve to be forgiven. Maybe he or she does not deserve it. Neither did Joseph’s brothers deserve it. Neither do you and I deserve it.

Forgive him or her anyway. Do it because of the other one who also was stripped of His robe. Who also was deserted and betrayed. Who said, “I will pay the price. I will bear the cross. Let the punishment fall on me.”

What made Joseph able to endure – and endure so graciously – so many years of being mistreated – and not take revenge on his brothers? The same three things that can make us able to endure it. Three things that are mentioned in our First Reading and Gospel Lesson.

1. Knowing that his father had told him to do it.
Genesis 50: 16 – They approached Joseph saying, “Your father gave this instruction before he died.”
Cf. the Lord’s Prayer – “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who”
Ephesians 4: 32 – “Forgive one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”
2. Knowing how much he had been forgiven.
Versus Matthew 18: 23-35 – the man who had been forgiven ten thousand talents who refused to forgive one hundred denarii.
3. Knowing that God makes all things work together for good.
Genesis 50: 20 – “Even 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.”
Cf. Genesis 45: 8 – “It was not you who sent me here but God.”
Romans 8: 28 – “All things work together for good for those who love God.”