



Your Sins Are Forgiven

Luke 7:36—8:3

*Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."
The other guests began to say among themselves,
"Who is this who even forgives sins?"
Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved
you; go in peace."*

June 12, 2016

Thoughts for the Week

Scriptures: 1 Kings 17: 17-24 • Galatians 1:11-24 • Luke 7: 11-17

It often occurs to me when I read one of my many books each morning that I live a rather protected existence. As some of you readers already know, I live together with my wife of almost 47 years. We live in a nice home in a nice neighborhood right next door to our oldest son and his family. I am retired after working for the Bell System for 36 years and now enjoy, what most people call, the good life.

Needless to say, I lack for little: I have a nice garage to park my cars and a nice yard to keep mowed and trimmed. Food, as it's cooked by my lovely wife, is always mouth watering good, healthy and nutritious; medical needs are taken care of by some of the finest doctors in the world, and well, I am content. We have a safe and wonderful community to live in, protected by a great police force and I have no fear of threats or dangers to life or limb. In short, this is a safe and peaceful way of life.

All of this, of course, stands in stark contrast to the lives of many people around the world of whom I read about on-line every day.

Most of the stories I read about in other parts of the world would never happen in the place where I live.

In Nigeria, the news tells us, many young women students were kidnapped from their school and cannot be located by authorities. This would not happen on the campus of the University of Michigan, believe me.

In Puerto Rico, the first case of the Zika Virus was discovered just today. In South Sudan people are starving because the dry season provides no grain in the fields.

You can begin to understand my embarrassment then when I describe my own peaceful existence.

Nonetheless, the news is not all bad. For each of the dismal incidents described above, there is also news of people who try as best they can to assist the poor and the suffering. We see photos of mothers and fathers carrying little children to safety, Red Cross personnel hauling bags of wheat and rice to drought-stricken areas.

In our own country too there are countless examples of neighbors helping neighbors. Such events seem to demonstrate a human strain common to all of us: in difficult circumstances we set aside human differences and offer gestures of life-giving spirit to others. Such acts are not limited to Christians or those who read the Bible. It is a human gesture that rises from a deep sense of

compassion for our neighbor. This tragedy could happen to me!

Following this long introduction, I want to call your attention to two incidents in the scriptures that could be described as family tragedies. In the Jewish testament we hear of a widow whose son, the only provider, has recently died. In those times, as often in our own times as well, widows were left in dire straits and considered the first in line for daily assistance. In this instance, Elijah, a traveling prophet comes to the widow's aid.

The gospel story for this same Sunday repeats a similar tragic human incident. In his pastoral travels Jesus arrives at the village of Nain, a seacoast village in Sidon, a non-Jewish territory. Local folks immediately tell him of a widow whose son has only recently passed away. Setting aside all cultural and religious differences, Jesus immediately says a word of healing and the man recovers.

I bring up these two scriptural incidents not to naively claim that we can do miracles but to remind us that we can be healers by the power of our words of compassion and consolation.

As we all know, words can carry the weight of good or evil. We can bring life to others by our words or we can simply remain silent and let others take care of themselves. The latter option, of course, does not carry the weight of very much grace.

Prayer Thought – Mozambique

Lord of all space, we thank you for knowing us. We praise you for the gift of your Son and our savior, Jesus, whose spirit is born anew within us each day.

We seek forgiveness for the times we have ignored the injustice around us.

Cleanse us of our indifference, give us hearts filled with your compassion, and inspire us to reach out to others in love.

We uphold for your blessing of peace the nation and people of Mozambique. Bless all who suffer the injustice of war and poverty, and guide leaders to seek peaceful resolution to the conflicts that rend their land and displace so many people. Help us be more courageous as we address violence, poverty, and religious discrimination in our own communities.

We look forward to the day when all people are free from injustice and persecution. Help us to be instruments of change; to offer hope to those who are in need, to offer comfort and aid to those who are helpless, and to work in our homes and communities to further the cause of justice. Help us remember we are all part of the same family, each one deserving of love, dignity and respect.

May your spirit of healing and peace draw us closer to you and to one another in love. Amen.

Stewardship Thought

“When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet” Luke 7:44

Today's Gospel calls us to consider how we serve God.
Do we consume like the Pharisee who simply reclines at the table
and expects to be served?

Or, do we contribute like the woman who kneels before Jesus
and washes His feet? Every day we must make a choice.
Take or give? Consume or contribute? Recline or serve?

One in Christ Moment

What if you opened your heart and listened to God's promptings?
What if you risked exploring the relationships God laid before you?

Today, you have an opportunity to open new doors
and explore the world we've been given.

God, where will your Spirit lead today?

Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.

Grant me the courage to risk something new
and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen