

Reading for the Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

13th September 2026

First reading

Sirach 27:30-28:7

‘Forgive your neighbour the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.’

Anger and wrath, these are abominations, and the sinful man will hold them fast.

The one who seeks vengeance will be paid vengeance from the Lord,

and he who keeps a record will have his own sins recorded.

Forgive your neighbour the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.

Does one person harbour anger against another and yet seek for healing from the Lord?

Does he have no mercy towards someone like himself and yet pray concerning his own sins?

If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath, who will make atonement for his sins?

Remember the end of your life and cease from enmity, remember destruction and death and be true to the commandments.

Remember the commandments and do not be angry with your neighbour;

remember the covenant of the Most High and overlook error.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 103(102):1-2. 3-4. 9-10. 11-12. R8

The Lord is compassionate and gracious,

slow to anger and rich in mercy.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me, his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all his benefits.

It is the Lord who forgives all your sins, who heals every one of your ills,

who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with mercy and compassion.

He will not always find fault; nor persist in his anger for ever.

He does not treat us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our faults.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so strong his mercy for those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far from us does he remove our transgressions.

Second reading

Romans 14:7-9

‘Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.’

Brothers and Sisters: None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if 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. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Gospel Acclamation

John 13:34

Alleluia, alleluia.

A new commandment I give to you, says the Lord,
that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 18:21-35

‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’

At that time: Peter came up and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’

‘Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, “Pay what you owe.” So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.” He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, “You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

By failing to forgive, we hurt ourselves more than anyone else. Surely this is what Jesus had in mind when he told how the merciless servant was cast into prison when he refused to forgive his fellow servant. I don’t think he was suggesting that God would cancel his mercy. He is simply saying that an unforgiving spirit creates a prison of its own. It builds up walls of bitterness and resentment and there is no escape until we come to forgive.

Forgiving and letting go is not easy, especially when the wound is very deep. This is why I call forgiveness the ‘F’ word, because it’s not to be used lightly. Forgiveness is a choice and often involves a three stage process: (1) I will never forgive that person (2) I can’t forgive (forgiveness seen as a good thing, but the hurt is too great) (3) I want to forgive and let go with God’s help.

Also we must learn to forgive ourselves. Imagine you are responsible for something very serious. You are driving a car with drink. There is an accident and a young person is killed. That life cannot be brought back. For more and more people there is a something in the background, some skeleton in the closet—a broken marriage, an abortion, a pregnancy outside marriage, a broken relationship, a serious mistake. And for many of us we do not believe that there is another chance much less a seven times seventy chances. This is not the teaching of Jesus. God does not just give us another chance, but every time we close a door he opens another one for us.

The Lord challenges us not to make serious damaging mistakes, but he also tells us that our mistakes are not forever—they are not even for a life time—and that time and grace wash clean, that nothing is irrevocable.