

## The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (2020)

Holy Spirit, Light Divine: Shine upon this heart of mine;  
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day;  
Let me see my Savior's face; let me all His beauties trace;  
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee.  
Amen.

**Matthew 18:21–35** *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.*

In the Name of Jesus.

Yes! God’s-not-great-with-big-numbers! God-Jesus; He’s all about 2 or 3, gathered at His authority, in His Name, where His Baptism and Where HIS teaching: ‘That’s W...H...E...R...E... y’all will find ME!’ (If anyone is looking for the Man, for the God Who prefers the eraser end of the pencil to the point.!)

Starting from the beginning of the Bible, it seems to your poor pastor that God CAN handle numbers past 2 and 3; He can count all the way to 6! ‘In six days God created the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that’s in them!’ But when the Creator gets to the number 7, He’s HAD it! Rest! Jesus too! The Jesus GIVEN ALL authority in the 6-day created heavens and earth; the Jesus of your Baptism; the Jesus Who teaches you to pray what heaven and earth cannot contain: ‘You don’t know how to pardon ME?, dear Father in heaven? Just watch ME—pardon!—on earth!—and do likewise!’

MOST of the Gospel lesson is one unhappy story for those who refuse to pardon others from the hearts. Why is our sweet and gentle Jesus so testy today?

I’ve learned from my squad of feelings doctors that when a man lashes out it is often frustration. Jesus got the frustrate: ‘This is the way my heavenly Father will treat y’all—jailed until the last

coin is repaid and you got NO HOPE of payin' the FIRST coin!—if and when y'all do not forgive your brother from the heart!'

He's so worked up, the really smart folk who translate the Gospel According to Saint Matthew from Greek are still going back-and-forth about Jesus' numbers here. "7? No!" But what does He say instead? 77? 70 TIMES 7?

Well...we may not be smart enough to translate Matthew, but we Lutherans know AZACKLY what Jesus' reply to Peter was. '7 times? No! Repent! And—be just a LITTLE glad that I am here, in Y'ALL'S midst! Son of David; Son of Abraham; Son of God.'

I cannot grade Jesus on His cyphering skills. But He gets A+ on knowing people! He really IS a people, born of the Virgin. M...E...A...N...I...G.... that HE is with us ALL—G...O...D... WITH US and every last WHISP of God! And God in Christ: He is 'all in!' With those who need to learn all day every day all over again: His disciples.

Peter knew people also; himself for certain! I empathize! 'Lord, if YOU are all that YOU are—OK...But I just cannot see myself APPROXIMATING what YOU are! Tried walking on water with You; and the less said about that, the better! I may be one of the worstest sinners! Depart from me! But there are also those who wrong ME...and I see MYSELF running out of gas, out of sin-amnesia if I start counting....'

Ah! It is NOT just the COUNTING, my dear ones! It's the FOCUS! 'If YOU, Jesus, God, heaven-on-earth, perfection; but what about ME?!'

The only place that lands you is the only place the SAVIOR knows how to save: 'You wanna ask me and treat me like I'm a Moses—Let's do this! You have rough jailers in your future and eternal shackles and a debt you cannot BEGIN to pay—not just when you count and add up; but when you FIGURE you gotta equate YOU with ME!'

It IS the worstest thang you and I do, my fellow disciples in the same boat! That we would start the counting—of the annoyances and toe stepping and daggers to the heart and the THOUGHTLESSNESS... ‘Fool me once, shame on you; twice, three times; but SEVEN?!’

S...A...I...N...T Peter... chief of the apostles!....Simon Peter asked the one who was heading to the place where He would gain for all a righteousness surpassing the best pillars the church has ever seen— No! He was NOT asking! Peter was TELLING Jesus! ‘I can see the next man—even my BROTHER!—offending me over and over: 5, 6, sev.....’

‘You stop it right THERE, Rock-o! THAT is all the rough-handling I will take from the likes of you. Lemme tell you about eternal death and how well you deserve it!’

We know we’re on that broad and easy path, my dear ones, when we.... We have TWO stories today!

Joseph story, people are falling at our feet and begging; Jesus story, when we have a man by the THROAT.

‘I don’t grab throats, pastor!’

Well, then why do you lay out your INDICTMENTS of the next man, point by point, to everyone you know?! You’re looking for SOME authority to stamp your detailed condemnation. And God’s got ears now; ears that hear.

People start talkin’ fast—makin’ stuff up too!—when they are losing air; when we have them by the throat; when they are wrong and we are right and everyone knows it, in heaven and on earth.

IF...we want play this dangerous game, about trying to walk in Jesus’ sandals, there is only one place to go: Moses!

The way I read the Old Covenant: the Lord pledged to bless His nation Israel with all they need in the world and more; so much so, that although they WOULD have poor people, always in need around them—yet, ISRAEL would NOT have poor people in their midst!

Been puzzling over this strange word of Moses, Deuteronomy 15. About the special year—wanna guess which number? 7!

Every seventh year, they were to and pardon debts and all sorts of things we capitalists and socialists will never understand. Then, Moses says this:

**15** “At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. <sup>2</sup> And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD’s release has been proclaimed. <sup>3</sup> Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release. <sup>4</sup> But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess— <sup>5</sup> if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.

<sup>7</sup> “If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, <sup>8</sup> but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.<sup>1</sup>

‘But there will BE...NO...POOR...AMONG...YOU. For those in your midst will have: YOU!’

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Dt 15:1–8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

‘Baptize; teach my ways; and there I AM IN THE MIDST OF Y’ALL, to the End of the age!’

My dear ones. Even my sweetheart darling has questioned me about why I insist that y’all pencil in a time to sin during the week. Sometimes your miserable minister—there’s a phrase, ‘too clever by half.’ It’s just going too fast.

I am begging you to sin: M...E...A...N...I...N...G.... I am begging you to listen to and recite and pray and trust the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther. Sing of your Baptism! Sing of God Who MUST be three in one and one in three otherwise it would not turn out well for YOU! Make God your dear Father in heaven, with boldness and confidence. Then—only then!—recite and live out and sing and trust for daily deeds and good, the Ten Commandments of Moses. Put your heart into THEM—and you pencil in bountiful opportunities to sin, daily, and much!

But....Moses had HIS scary mountain; that NO ONE could approach but Moses. Jesus had His own mountain; and the guarantee: ‘God is with you and I am with you and our Spirit is with you—all together and ONE—with you, ALL THE WAY THROUGH this age that is I pledge to you I WILL BRING TO AN END!’

There will be no poor among you. Because LONG BEFORE they come begging, you will enrich them! But how do we do that without interfering where we don’t belong? Welcome to the New Testament!

There will be no sinners among you. LONNNNGGG before they come asking for pardon—maybe they never will?! No matter how many days you wait for an apology, days ticking by: 2, 3...5, 6, sev.....

LONG before the next man begs pardon and puffs out his last breath trying to explain why he is the way he is... The next man will breathe easy, because you are with him, til’ Jesus ENDS this!

You are one thing; me too. HE, our Jesus, is another.

LONG before you and I started counting up men's wrong instead of pardoning them, He gave His Body into death, and shed His Blood—and still gives them to us to eat and to drink. For what? For one purpose: while we're eating the Bread and drinking the Cup and eating His Body and drinking His Blood, for those few seconds, WE cannot possibly start blowing air and explaining ourselves and promising to do better and begging.

Instead, He takes the worstest sinners—the world cannot know what you and I know. He takes us, and pardons us. Then God in heaven is confident that our neighbor, our brother, on earth has hope in the Name of Jesus.