

SERMON - THE 22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY - 19 OCTOBER 2008  
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

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**Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV)**

*Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? <sup>22</sup>Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

I was reading in a commentary that we are enjoined by Christ to forgive. I love that word, enjoin. It means to direct or impose by an authoritative order. In other words we are commanded by Jesus to forgive others.

This passage from Matthew tells us that Jesus commands us to forgive others innumerable times, as many times as necessary.

We hear in **Luke 17:3-4 (KJV)** *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. <sup>4</sup>And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

This is sometimes hard to do.

There are things that happen that seem impossible to forgive; the Holocaust, Pearl Harbor, Nine-Eleven.

There are things that happen to us personally that seem impossible to forgive. There are those that experience physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

How can any of these things be forgiven?

We have to start with God's forgiveness, God's forgiveness to each of us.

We hear in **Matthew 6:14-15 (KJV)** *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly*

*Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

And again we hear in **Romans 12:14 (KJV)** *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

And again in **Romans 12:19-21 (KJV)** *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. <sup>20</sup>Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. <sup>21</sup>Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Evil happens. That is a fact of life, a fact of life since the world began. Since the time that Satan revolted against God. Since the time that Adam disobeyed God. Evil happens.

And evil will continue to happen until the end of the world.

But it is up to us, as Christians, to overcome evil. We cannot prevent it but we can overcome it. We are to overcome evil with good. We are to overcome evil with love.

God will do the revenging. **Proverbs 20:22 (KJV)** *Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.*

What we have to remember are two things. The first and foremost is that God is in control and not us. The other is that we are commanded to forgive but we are not commanded to forget.

God commands us to forgive even those who committed the Holocaust, those that committed Pearl Harbor, those that committed Nine-Eleven. He commands us to forgive those who have abused us.

But he has not commanded us to forget.

If we forget the Holocaust, if we forget Nine-Eleven then we are forgetting history and as it was once said, those who forget history are bound to repeat it.

But then how do we forgive?

We pray to God to help us.

Amen.