

*Old Testament Exodus 14:19–31*

*Psalm Psalm 114 or Exodus 15:1b–11, 20–21*

*New Testament Romans 14:1–12*

*Gospel Matthew 18:21–35<sup>1</sup>*

A darkness befell the Israelites darkness cast by the cloud that protected them from the Egyptians behind them.

In that darkness, God, through Moses prepared a path into new life - new light - a new way of being. And the people rejoiced in this. Fear has gone light and life came upon them and they were right to rejoice in the new life they had found. Yet a danger existed in this new found freedom and we hear of that danger in time to come. That danger was lacking direction. Moses has some idea yet even he was building up his leadership. God was in teaching mode and in forgiveness mode. It is a poignant reminder to use that our dark times are also times when God prepares us for something bigger and better.

Paul recognised this when he taught the Roman Christians. Some had been followers of Jesus for a while, some were new and somehow the community was splitting because some of the people were unable to find forgiveness; in differences of opinion and eating or not are two specifically mentioned. But Paul reminds them this should not happen, for in eating or not as long as they honour God they do the right thing – but there is a warning in this way of thinking!

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<sup>1</sup> *Revised Common Lectionary* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2009).

Not in their own mind but in the mind of the whole community is this acceptance! Last week we heard that each was to love one another and to reconcile differences. This week Paul says this is because each will have to stand before God in the day to come and therefore we should do what honours God. Whatever we do we do for the Lord. Living and dying we live or die to the Lord so we should not pass judgement on others because we ourselves will be judged by God therefore we must be accountable to God which makes us accountable to each other.

As a child, I often seethed against perceived wrongs done to me. I found it difficult to forgive, especially when I knew I was not the wrong-doer and that it was my brother or sister who left me in the cactus! Yet from these experiences as I grew, I learnt just how hard it is to perceive right and wrong in many instances and that my saving grace was forgiveness, of both my parents and siblings. To not hold these against them was to liberate myself from sin against myself. A lesson I still learn each and every day as I'm sure many of you likely do as well.

So how do we forgive? Jesus tells us that forgiveness has no end and must be continuous by us for God will be our judge and will forgive us as we forgive. Sounds familiar doesn't it?

We have been forgiven a great debt, one that cannot be forgiven. 1 talent is worth 15 years wages and the slave in Jesus' parable owes 10,000 talents. That's an immense debt and yet this man pleaded he will pay it back and was forgiven the whole debt.

When he saw a man who owed him money 100 denarii or 100 days wages he did not forgive and put him into prison until it was paid. You can imagine how hard that would be from a prison!

God has forgiven greatly, we must forgive then even in the small things or when we face God in the time to come we may find ourselves like the first slave.

We are a people who should live in freedom from debt or sin or trespasses, whichever way you'd like to put it because we have been released from our sin against God, against the world and one another. We are called to work in unity to call others into the great love we have received. That is achieved by actions that show loving forgiveness from **deep within our hearts**. If you have anything against a brother or sister, I invite you to ask forgiveness of God then seek forgiveness from those sinned against so that when we come together in community and receive the Eucharist, we do so from a clean heart and clear mind receiving anew the love of God and one another having confessed our sin. Let us take a moment to renew ourselves before God *silence*

Let us pray this prayer for ourselves as I speak:

I confess before God that I have sinned against God and against you my brothers and sisters and ask your forgiveness. I ask God to help me in my time of trial and deliver me from evil. May I become renewed in your Holy Spirit so I may be light and life in your world. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and saviour to whom all shall bend their knee. Amen.