

The Twenty- Second Sunday after Trinity

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Preacher: Fr. Randall Russell

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. In the ancient world, it was understood that all crimes committed within the king's realm committed a crime in one state, and then fled to another state for refuge.

The state in which the person committed the crime would still have the right to prosecute and even bring that person back to the state in which the crime had been committed.

In fact, in some cases, it doesn't even matter if the offended party chooses to press charges or not, because the state itself has the ultimate right to judge those who have committed crimes within its own jurisdiction.

And in the ancient world, that was true for every kingdom as well. Therefore, all crimes committed within the king's realm were considered crimes committed against the king himself.

And who is God but the king of all creation? Therefore, all sins committed within God's creation, within his realm and his domain, are also sins committed against God himself.

[1 : 47] And it doesn't matter if the person you sinned against chooses to forgive you or not, because in the end, it is God alone, creation's king, who will be your ultimate judge.

And obviously, there is some great, great comfort that we can all take from that. Especially if we've ever asked someone for forgiveness or tried to make amends, but that person just outright refused to forgive.

Or let's say we've wanted to ask someone for his or her forgiveness, but for whatever reason, that simply is not possible.

In all those cases, the idea that we could all go to the king of creation himself, or even go to the servants of the king, whose job it is to dispense the king's forgiveness, well, that is a great, great comfort.

But, but, let us not forget that that same forgiveness which we receive is also the same forgiveness which we all are called to give.

[3 : 25] For if the king of creation has the power and has the authority to forgive every single sin that is committed within his realm, does he also not have the power and have the authority to ask of us to do the same?

Which is really what this morning's parable of the unforgiving servant is all about. For the king tells that unforgiving servant, You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And then the parable goes on to say, And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers, until he should pay all that was due to him.

To which our own lord, and our own king, then quickly adds, And so my heavenly father also will do to you, if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

And I imagine at this point, many of you are probably wondering, well, is that it? Is that how this ends?

[5 : 01] Is that seriously how Father Randall is going to end this morning's sermon? With a warning? And an image of torture? That's kind of a bummer.

But please let me remind you, that I'm not the one who chose to end this morning's gospel that way. It is our lord, and our own king, who chose to end his own parable, with a warning, and with an image of torture.

But do you remember the good old days? You know, about 10 or 15 minutes ago, when at the very beginning of the parable, the king was just all mercy, and love, and grace, and he was just all about settling accounts, and forgiving massively huge amounts of debt.

Boy, boy, how I miss that king. Well, we don't have to miss him. That king has not changed.

He is still the same and loving, merciful king. In fact, no one in this morning's gospel has actually changed.

[6 : 28] And that's precisely the problem. The problem is that the unforgiving servant in this morning's parable does not change.

He is a selfish sinner at the beginning of the parable, and he is a selfish sinner right unto the very end. For let us never forget that the king is not the bad guy in this story.

On the contrary, he is a truly good and righteous king who is always loving, always forgiving, and always just.

For it would be unjust for any wise and noble king to simply turn a blind eye to the way his servants mistreat one another, especially after that king forgives them all their personal debt.

I mean, if you won the lottery, wouldn't you expect your life to change? And when the king forgives us all our debts, shouldn't he expect for our own lives to change as well?

[7 : 56] For repentance simply is not just feeling bad about the things we've done or left undone. Repentance means change.

change. And the fact that the unforgiving servant did not repent, did not change, is quite obvious because he refused to forgive his brother and thereby spat in the face of the king's mercy.

For all sins committed within the king's realm are indeed sins committed against the king himself. Therefore, let us pray that when our own end comes, it may be far different than the end of this morning's parable.

For thus says the king, love one another as I have loved you. Forgive and you will be forgiven.

Truly live in God's mercy and you will continue to be shown mercy. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

[9 : 20] Amen.