

Readings 9.13.20

Readers: Jim

Prayers: Sallie

Merciful God, we pray that your church may be welcoming and open. Teach us to draw others to you by our love and mercy. May we be a strength to the wavering and uplift the fallen, standing firm in our love for you and your mission. We pray in the name of Jesus your son. *Amen.*

Romans 14:1-12

14 Welcome all the Lord's followers, even those whose faith is weak. Don't criticize them for having beliefs that are different from yours. ² Some think it is all right to eat anything, while those whose faith is weak will eat only vegetables. ³ But you should not criticize others for eating or for not eating. After all, God welcomes everyone. ⁴ What right do you have to criticize someone else's servants? Only their Lord can decide if they are doing right, and the Lord will make sure that they do right.

⁵ Some of the Lord's followers think one day is more important than another. Others think all days are the same. But each of you should make up your own mind. ⁶ Any followers who count one day more important than another day do it to honor their Lord. And any followers who eat meat give thanks to God, just like the ones who don't eat meat.

⁷ Whether we live or die, it must be for God, rather than for ourselves. ⁸ Whether we live or die, it must be for the Lord. Alive or dead, we still belong to the Lord. ⁹ This is because Christ died and rose to life, so that he would be the Lord of the dead and of the living. ¹⁰ Why do you criticize other followers of the Lord? Why do you look down on them? The day is coming when God will judge all of us. ¹¹ In the Scriptures God says, "I swear by my very life that everyone will kneel down and praise my name!" ¹² And so, each of us must give an account to God for what we do.

Psalm 103.8-13

8 You, O God, are full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.

9 You will not always accuse us, *
nor will you keep your anger for ever.

10 You have not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is your mercy great upon those who fear you.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, *
so far have you removed our sins from us.
- 13 As a parent cares for a child, *
so do you care for those who fear you.

Matthew 18:21-35 the unforgiving man

Good News Translation

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”

22 “No, not seven times,” answered Jesus, “but seventy times seven, **23** because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants’ accounts. **24** He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. **25** The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. **26** The servant fell on his knees before the king. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay you everything!’ **27** The king had compassion for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.

28 “Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he said. **29** His fellow servant fell down and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!’ **30** But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. **31** When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. **32** So he called the servant in. ‘You worthless man!’ he said. ‘I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. **33** You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.’ **34** The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount.”

35 And Jesus concluded, “That is how my God will treat every one of you unless you forgive from your heart.”