

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

Genesis 50:15-21

- These events take place at least seventeen years after Joseph's brothers came first to Egypt, since Genesis 47:28 says that Jacob lived for seventeen years in Egypt. Before Jacob dies, he has "blessed" each of his twelve sons, sometimes with true blessings and sometimes not. For example, Jacob says to Simeon and Levi: "weapons of violence are their swords. May I never come into their council; may I not be joined to their company ... Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." (Genesis 49:5-7) Jacob also makes his sons promise that they will bury him back in Canaan, which they have just finished when this passage occurs. What do you remember from the Joseph story? Why would the brothers be worried about Joseph's response?
- How are you with grudges/forgiveness? Is it harder for you to forgive others? Or yourself? Why?

Psalms 103:1-13

- I like the way The Message words verse 2: "O my soul, bless God, don't forget a single blessing!" After the psalmist encourages us to not forget God's blessings, he outlines what those blessings are:
 - Forgives all your sins
 - Heals all your diseases
 - Redeems your life from the grave
 - Crowns you with steadfast love and mercy
 - Satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.In what other ways has God blessed us? How has God blessed you? What would happen if you tried to name every way that God has blessed you? How would that change your thinking or outlook?
- The psalmist names not only how God blesses him but also how God blesses the people, not just God's present blessings but also the many ways God has blessed the people in the past. We are called to look for how God works in ourselves and in our communities, in the present and in the past.
- When The Message re-words verse 8, it says, "God is sheer mercy and grace." The psalm names these attributes of God, because we are meant to be shaped by who God is and what God does. What part of these attributes and workings of God most need to shape who you are? How can you allow God to shape you into that person?

Romans 14:1-12

- This passage reflects the diversity of views found within the Roman believing community. What is Paul's advice about dealing with differences in belief, conviction, or behavior? What differences in belief divide us (as a local church, as a denomination, as a community, or as a country)? What differences divide us in this pandemic? How can we use Paul's advice to help us?
- After our passage, Paul gives further advice about dealing with differences in the community:

13 Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of another. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. 19 Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual edification.

What do these instructions mean to us in our differences?

Matthew 18:21-35

- When Jesus responds to Peter's question about forgiveness, it can be translated as either 77 times or as seventy times seven (= 490). Either way, Jesus here does not mean to emphasize quantity, as if after 78 times or 491 times we do not have to forgive any more. Rather, seven has the symbolic sense of completeness. In other words, Jesus is saying that we are to forgive as many times as it takes for that forgiveness to be complete.
- Just to make the contrast clear: a *talent* was the equivalent of 20 years worth of work. So, how much did the slave owe the king when it is 10,000 talents? Meanwhile, a *denarius* was worth a day's wage. So, how much did the one slave owe the other when it was 100 denarii? What do these differences say about us?
- Who or what have you had difficulty forgiving?
- How can we encourage one another to be more forgiving?