

Sermon- August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Text - Genesis 50:15-21 and Matthew 18:21-35

## It's Not Rocket Science

Grace and peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Here's a cute story from an ELCA Pastor near the home of the ViQueens.

It was 9 o'clock on a Sunday morning, and the mother called downstairs to the boy who was still sleeping: "Get up, lazybones, it's time to go to church." The boy quickly answered, "No, I don't want to go to church." The mother tried again, "It's Sunday morning and you're going to church, so get up." But the response was still the same. "No, I don't want to go to church." The mother, exasperated, said to the boy, "Why? Give me two good reasons why you don't want to go to church." And the boy responded, "Um...because the sermons are boring and nobody in that church likes me. Now you give me two good reasons why I should go to church." And the mother replied, "Because you're 67 years old and you're the pastor of that church."

Well, I never have that problem and I hope you don't as well. I am always excited to come to worship and have my battery recharged. So that I can be a better Christian from Monday through Saturday. So, with God's help, I can walk the walk. I hope that is true for you as well.

Today, we are confronted with biblical texts that engage us to grapple with family situations and math. That's a strange combination. Joseph and his brothers and Jesus response to Peter and the line 70x7. But, it's also easy to see that the overwhelming theme is forgiveness, with a minor theme of non- judgement. Those two themes are also related.

Joseph - in the book of Genesis. You probably know the story from Sunday school classes. But here's a quick synopsis. Cliff notes. Joseph, son of Jacob and Rachel. Favorite son of Jacob. Father gives him a coat of many colors as a gift. We will get to that a little later.

His brothers were very jealous of Joseph. Actually, because he was so favored by Dad, they had dislike of Joseph. Conspired to kill him. The Genesis account has the brothers throwing him in a pit, selling him as a slave, and then putting blood on that coat of many colors and telling dear old Dad that Joseph was devoured by wild animals. Out of sight, out of mind. Fast forward. Joseph sent to Egypt, put in jail, trumped up charges involving a woman. (2018 newspaper accounts about women). Joseph begins interpreting dreams for inmates and jailers. (Did that as a young man). Pharaoh hears about it and Joe is given a job as the interpreter for the big guy. Kind of like Sarah Sanders for Trump. He correctly forecasts a drought in Egypt and also is proactive in storing grain in anticipation of the drought. Thus, he is made Secretary of Agriculture in Egypt. His brothers come to Egypt hoping for grain and confront their brother and what happens is our first lesson. Forgiveness.

A story. Cathy and I are in the Windy City, Chicago. I like The Windy City. I went to Seminary there, and every so often I need the big city fix. We had tickets to a play, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat. Maybe you have seen it. This version of the play starred Donnie Osmond of the Osmond Family fame. I wasn't too excited. Why did I want to hear Donnie Osmond in a starring, singing role? Well two things happened. First, Donnie Osmond was fantastic. As if God was saying, "don't judge, Dennis".

Second, the theme of forgiveness reached my heart. The classic line from the lesson in Genesis and the play - "Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God. I forgive you." WOW. Big stuff. He forgave big time. Perhaps we have done that. Forgiven big time. I wish that the author would have added an addendum. \*\* And Joseph smiled and his heart was glad because God helped him to forgive. That's how it works. God helps us to forgive and our hearts are glad.

Which leads me to the Gospel. It's a parable about judgment but more importantly about forgiveness. "Should you not have had mercy on your friend as I had mercy on you." Or, should you not have forgiven, as I had forgiven you? Sound familiar? Jesus said it throughout the scriptures. Forgive others as I have forgiven you. What is fun and interesting is what prompted the parable. It was the question from Peter. "Lord, how many times should I forgive this idiot? Seven Times." The reason Peter chooses 7 was that was the requirement for a good Jew. Once you forgave 7 times your obligation was over. Eight and above - the heck

with them. But Jesus does that math thing. No Peter - 70x7. Not 490 but always Peter. We never stop forgiving.

In a few months, I will officiate at three weddings here at church. From a usual text at weddings comes the line - Love does not keep a record of wrongs. I will remind them that the small things we do not forgive become BIG THINGS! Any one married here this morning should be nodding their heads in agreement. To lead a full, joyous marriage we need to forgive. To lead a full, joyous life, we need to be a forgiving people.

Yes. It's not rocket science. How many times should I forgive? Don't stop. Don't ever stop!

Amen. Let it be so.