

Sermon, Feb. 20, 2022, Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany—Trinity Lutheran Church—Pastor Peter Saie

Text: Genesis 45:3-15; Psalm 103; 1Cor. 15:21-26, 30-42; Luke 6:27-38.

Grace, Mercy and Peace through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior,
Amen +.

Theme: “From the pit of death to our heavenly mansions through Christ Jesus.”

Introduction: Love and forgiveness are the greatest virtues of our Christian faith; though we sometimes hear some Christians say, “I love you so much, but I cannot forgive you for hurting me.” And usually, these are the words of an angry lover who desires to pay back for the pain and agony he or she has sustained. But the truth of the matter is that true love always supersedes ones’ physical pains through forgiveness, because God is love. The Apostle John once wrote, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love, 1John 4:7-8.” Peter also asked Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew 18, “Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? And Jesus said to Peter, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy seven times.” Therefore, true love has the power to forgive in any situation timelessly.

In our Old Testament lesson, we see Joseph’s story as the typology or the type for Christ within the Old Testament; for he was very obedient and trustworthy to his father Jacob than his elder brothers, and because of this, their father gives him a beautiful coat of many colors; then Joseph had the dream from the Lord, revealing him to become the chosen leader for the entire family. But Joseph loves his family so much

including his elderly brothers, and he would take food and water to them each time they carry their father's cattle for grassing.

But because of jealousy, his brothers plotted to kill him when he carried them food and water in the field; they tied him up and put him into a pit to die, but then they saw the Egyptians merchants passing by, and they decided to sell him for pieces of silver coins as a slave.

We all know the rest of the story, but Joseph was taken from the pit to be later exalted to the right hand of the Pharaoh of Egypt—from the pit to the palace, controlling all the agricultural produce of Egypt. Then some years later, famine struck the entire regions of Egypt and beyond including the land of Canaan, and Joseph's brothers came to Egypt in search for grains to buy.

But when Joseph saw his brothers, he sent his Egyptian guards outside the room and said to them, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living? But his brothers were unable to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you..."

In other words, Joseph was saying that his brothers did not know what they were doing by selling him into Egypt, but he forgives them, because he knew that was according to God's plan so that lives may be saved through him.

These words of Joseph were the identical words of our Lord Jesus, when he was being nailed on the cross, praying for the forgiveness of the sins of those nailing him, saying, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!**" And like Joseph was exalted from the pit to Pharaoh's right hand, Jesus, in the same way, was buried in tomb

and the on the third day was risen from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Therefore, the apostle Paul declares in our Epistle lesson, “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when hands over the kingdom of God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power...”

In other words, that by Christ’s death and resurrection, all those who have died in Him and buried in the pit of the grave, will be resurrected at the coming of the Lord and live eternally in the kingdom of God without end—we will rise from the pit of Adam’s sin to the glory of God’s kingdom by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, the Psalm writer seeing the love of God through His Son, declares, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s...”

Oh yes! The love of the Lord endures forever for those who fear Him; he gives healings, protections, and redemption through His Son’s death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins.

In our Gospel lesson, our Lord Jesus tells his disciples to follow his footsteps in loving not only their friends or neighbors but their enemies as well; those who hate and curse them and even those who strike

them on their cheeks and inflame pains on them and that they should be also generous to those who take away from them.

In the same way, Christ has called us also through the Gospel and the Holy Spirit and has given us the command to love, forgive and care for our neighbors, our brothers, and our enemies as well; and though the task is not humanly possible, but with God, all things are possible; Christ gives us His Spirit to love others as he has loved us.

For we are able to love others and do all things through Christ Himself, because God is love, and we have been born of God through Christ Jesus by grace through faith in our baptism into His death and resurrection. And through our future resurrection, we will see Christ and will be like Him for all eternity--from death to eternal life.

May the peace of God which passes all human understanding guide your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Amen.