

Sunday, February 20, 2022 – Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

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Introduction

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with Creator and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.

³Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.'" ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

¹Do not be provoked by | evildoers;
do not be jealous of those | who do wrong.

²**For they shall soon wither | like the grass,
and like the green grass | fade away.**

³Put your trust in the LORD| and do good;
dwell in the land and | find safe pasture.

⁴**Take delight | in the LORD,
who shall give you your | heart's desire.**

⁵Commit your way to the LORD; put your trust | in the LORD,
and see what | God will do.

⁶**The LORD will make your vindication as clear | as the light
and the justice of your case like the | noonday sun.**

⁷Be still before the LORD and wait | patiently.
Do not be provoked by the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in | evil schemes.

⁸**Refrain from anger, leave | rage alone;
do not be provoked; it leads on- | ly to evil.**

⁹For evildoers shall | be cut off,
but those who hope in the LORD shall pos- | sess the land.

¹⁰**In a little while the wicked shall | be no more;
even if you search out their place, they will | not be there.**

¹¹But the lowly shall pos- | sess the land;
they will delight in abun- | dance of peace.

³⁹**But the deliverance of the righteous comes from | you, O LORD;
you are their stronghold in | time of trouble.**

⁴⁰You, O LORD, will help them and | rescue them;
you will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them, because in you | they seek
refuge.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

In the Apostles' Creed, we speak of the "resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Using the metaphor of a planted seed and the story of Adam, Paul preaches passionately about the mystery of following Christ's perfect life into eternity.

³⁵But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"

³⁶Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

⁴²So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Gospel Reading: Luke 6:27-38

Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.

[Jesus said:] ²⁷"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made, saying “God of grace,” and responding, “hear our prayer.”

A brief silence.

You teach us to love our neighbors and enemies alike. Encourage your church to follow the leading of your love, especially when it is risky or difficult. Help us to show mercy just as we have first received mercy. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Nurture fields that lie dormant, resting until it is time to bloom again. Bless farmers and all who cultivate fields and urban gardens. Give favorable weather for planting. Bring forth from buried seed an abundant harvest, and guard against famine and disease. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Look upon our world with mercy, that we delight in an abundance of peace. Protect all whose lives are marred by war and civil unrest. Release political prisoners and amplify the voices that challenge us to seek forgiveness and pursue nonviolence. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your people cry out for mercy. Console hearts that long for forgiveness. Mend broken relationships. Heal bodies that suffer chronic pain or illness. Strengthen and deliver all whose spirits are troubled (*especially those who we name now, either aloud, or silently on our hearts...*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You bind us together into one family. Teach us to forgive one another and to resolve conflicts with humility and patience. Bless families of all shapes and sizes, and show love to those who are lonely or grieving. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We praise you for the saints who have inherited the fullness of your kingdom (*especially*). As you have raised them to imperishable and eternal life, sustain us in faith by the promise of resurrection. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

A reflection for the Seventh Sunday after Epiphany...

The promise and its fulfillment may not look at all alike, even though they are intimately connected. Paul speaks about seeds and plants as he tries to picture resurrection life. Joseph's brothers never thought they would see him alive again, so how shocking he must have appeared to them as an Egyptian leader! Jesus invites us to sow seeds of new life by loving enemies.

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