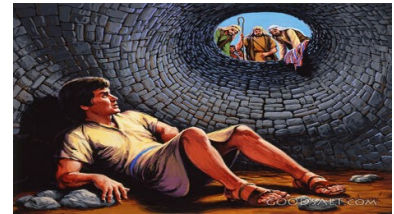




Over the years, each of us may have experienced hurt. Someone may have spoken unfairly or unjustly to us; family members may have hurt or rejected us; friends may have caused distress through their words or actions; and colleagues may have left us feeling unloved, inadequate, or rejected. Carrying these wounds is difficult. They can remain quietly in the background for years, only to resurface when something triggers them. When this happens, they may lead to stress,

anxiety, fear, or depression. We need to find ways to help us heal. Our readings today give us examples of where people harm others and ways that we can learn to forgive others.

Joseph's brothers may have understood that pain years earlier, when they sold him into slavery. How did Joseph respond to their betrayal? With God's help, he rose to become a powerful leader in Egypt and, despite their actions, saved his family from famine. After their father died, the brothers feared that Joseph would take revenge for the way they had treated him.



Although Joseph had treated them kindly, his brothers still feared they were not safe. Joseph reassured them, but he didn't deny the pain they had caused nor concealed the truth. Instead, he refused to let those wounds define the outcome. He reminded them that, although they had intended harm, God had used it for good. God remained with Joseph through his trials and enabled him to forgive his brothers.

In Matthew's Gospel, Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive, believing that seven times is generous. Jesus tells him not to keep count. He then describes a servant whose enormous, unpayable debt is forgiven, yet who refuses to forgive another person's much smaller debt. Jesus is not saying that wrongdoing, pain, and tears do not matter. Rather, he reminds us that God's mercy can transform our hearts. We should not accept forgiveness while refusing to offer it to others. Forgiveness may take time, but with God beside us, we can approach it honestly. Joseph's story illustrates this clearly. Given the opportunity to punish his brothers, he chooses another path: he speaks kindly to them and provides for them and their children. His forgiveness is neither cold nor distant, as forgiveness can sometimes seem in our own lives; it is warm, compassionate, and directed towards reconciliation.

In Romans, we hear this message applied to the church. Paul writes to Christians who disagree about food, holy days, and matters of conscience. Some follow stricter practices, while others take a more flexible approach to their lives and households. Paul challenges them: who are they to judge one another? His words also invite us to consider why we repeatedly dwell on another person's failures and where God is in the choices that affect those around us. Paul reminds us that each of us will stand before God; we do not need to carry the burden of being judge, jury, and saviour, because that role belongs to God.



Each reading speaks with one voice. Genesis shows that forgiveness does not mean pretending nothing happened. Matthew teaches that those who receive mercy are called to extend it. Romans reminds us that final judgement belongs to God, not to us. This matters in families, where old wounds can remain hidden for years; in churches, where differences of conscience can lead us to look down on one another; and in daily life, when tiredness, hurt, or anger tempts us to keep score. The gospel invites us to loosen our grip, not because justice is unimportant, but because God is faithful and calls us to live with mercy and forgiveness.



Forgiveness does not mean pretending that everything is fine or immediately rebuilding trust after abuse, harm, or hurt. It can take time, and we may need help and support as we recover from feeling wounded, unloved, or uncared for. We may also need to establish safe boundaries and lower them gradually as trust and love return. Through prayer, we can ask God, through Jesus, to help us move forward one step at a time, without fear of stepping back when

necessary. Our readings call us to turn away from revenge and the desire to harm those who have hurt us through their thoughts, words, or actions. We can ask God to help us stop acting as judge and jury or keeping score of the wrongs done to us.

Because God has shown us mercy, we are called to be merciful. We should seek God's forgiveness, extend forgiveness to others with honesty and care, and leave judgement in God's hands.

Think of the words of this song

Make me a channel of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love

Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord, And where there's doubt, true faith in You

Make me a channel of Your peace. Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope

Where there is darkness, only light, and where there's sadness, ever joy

Oh master, grant that I may never seek, so much to be consoled as to console

To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of Your peace, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned

In giving to all men that we receive, and in dying that we're born into eternal life

Make me a channel of Your peace, where there's despair in life, let me bring hope

Where there is darkness, only light, and where there's sadness ever joy.



When we live our lives chained to our past experiences, we may not be open to new ways of living and working. By allowing our chains within us, to be broken, we can learn to forgive and move on with our lives, knowing that God, through Jesus is there besides us, helping us to take one new step at a time. **Amen**

**Tina Titley**