

**Monday, May 22 - Read Matthew 6:25-24.** Do any of these words of Jesus sound like "good news?" We are challenged to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. But though we are called to 'not worry', what responsibility to do we bear for taking care of ourselves while still depending on God as Jesus instructs? The hope that everyone has - no matter what kind of relationship we are in or hope to be in - is that we have a Father who promises that if we prioritize a life of seeking him, he will prioritize a life of providing for us. Remember there is power in today. We can't allow the enemy to steal who God wants us to become today by causing us to stress about a potential outcome tomorrow.

**Tuesday, May 23 - Read 1 Corinthians 16:20 & 2 Corinthians 13:12.** In the earliest days of the church, Christians participated in a ritual act called "passing the peace." Through this, ritual, Christians would affirm and actualize their reconciled relationships before receiving Holy Communion. And if anyone had a broken relationship or unforgiveness in his or her heart, that the person was expected to work it out during the passing of the peace, lest he or she receive the sacrament in an unworthy manner. The action they would use would be to kiss each other. This is what the holy kiss meant and, what's more, it was an act that affected what it symbolized. When you engaged the kiss of peace, you proclaimed and made reconciliation happen. What is your first step toward reconciliation?

**Wednesday, May 24 - Read Romans 12:9-21.** If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we will be willing to forgive. If we have experienced God's grace, we will want to pass it on to others. And remember, grace is undeserved favor. By giving an enemy a drink, we're not excusing his misdeeds. We're recognizing him, forgiving him, and loving him in spite of his sins - just as Christ did for us. In this day of constant lawsuits and incessant demands for legal rights, Paul commands sound almost impossible. When someone hurts you deeply, instead of giving him what he deserves, Paul says to befriend him. Why does Paul tell us to forgive our enemies? (1) Forgiveness may break a cycle of retaliation and lead to mutual reconciliation. (2) It may make the enemy feel ashamed and change his or her ways. (3) By contrast, repaying evil for evil hurts you just as much as it does your enemy. Even if your enemy never repents, forgiving him or her will free you of a heavy load of bitterness.

**Thursday, May 25 - "It is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18.** In order to live "at peace with everyone," we need to forgive. It's not the same thing as reconciliation, though it begins the process. It is not the same thing as saying, "It's okay," because you have to call sin what it is to authentically forgive it. It also does not mean there are no consequences or legal ramifications, because sometimes the people we need to forgive also need to go to jail. What forgiveness, is in essence, is letting go of the burden that has been thrown in your lap by someone's sin against you. When you are wronged by someone, you get a wound that you have to carry around. Forgiveness occurs when you decide to stop carrying that wound around and let it go. As such, forgiveness only takes one person, which is how different from reconciliation. Reconciliation takes two people and may not be possible. Forgiveness does not, and it is therefore always possible, because it all starts and stops with us. Review the three steps outlined in the message from Sunday.

**Friday, May 26 - Read Matthew 18:23-25.** Jesus says forgiveness should always be a possibility, and this story we just read about masters, slaves and unpayable debts is intended to help his hearers appropriate the tough teaching. One slave owes so much there is no way he could ever pay it off. Consider the king. If his business is owed a large sum of money, and he doesn't collect, that is bad for business. When he decides he is no longer living by the ledger, he has stopped being in the 'good business' business. But the unforgiving slave holds onto his book and is determined to live by it. The ledger system Jesus is illustrating is toxic. It can only function in a system where there is no mercy. This system requires that you pay everyone you owe, and everyone who owes you pays you. If we kept a list of bad done to us and others did the same and all tried to make the other pay, that would be torture. That's Jesus' point. Which is why God doesn't do it. Jesus invites us to get out of the 'good business' business. Will you?