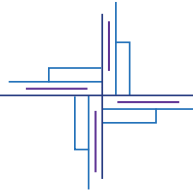


TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

*Pray then in this way.*

*Matthew 6:9a*



A common theme in Lent is repentance and seeking forgiveness from God for our sins. Today's reading, however, turns the tables and asks us to consider the extent to which we forgive others.

In the Gospel lesson appointed for today (Matthew 6:7–15), Jesus instructs his followers on how to pray. He says we are not to pray “as the Gentiles do” by heaping word after word upon each other but to pray using the simple and direct formula that we’ve come to know as the Lord’s Prayer.

At the end of Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus circles back and re-emphasizes how forgiving others is closely related to being forgiven by God: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others,

neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” This is a problem. Or at least it is for anyone (like me) who tends to hold onto righteous anger. As a fairly creative thinker, I’m skilled at coming up with all sorts of reasons why I should not forgive someone. How can I forgive them when they’ve never acknowledged any wrongdoing? How can I forgive them when nothing about their behavior has changed?

Those are good questions, and yet Jesus is telling us something important about the power of forgiveness to be a saving grace for its own sake. For our own healing, then, Jesus asks us to forgive.

**Today’s readings**

Psalms 34:15–22 | Isaiah 55:6–11

Matthew 6:7–15

*Even as we hold others accountable for their actions, how might we take Jesus’ emphasis on personal forgiveness to heart? What does taking a step toward such forgiveness look like today?*