

are plain facts. It has become a free-for-all world—in which we grab what we can but are never truly satisfied.

What can be done? If we followed Jesus' advice this week—of recognizing our blessings, of caring for our children, of not always insisting on our rights, of being humble, of walking in the light with each other, and of forgiving one another —perhaps we'd have happier homes and a happier nation! What do you think?

Numbers 13:31—14:25; Psalms 87, 90; Romans 3:9-20

by John G. Pearce

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Sunday, June 14

Luke 12:41-48 *“Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required.”* (v.48b RSV)

That's a sobering thought! What have we been given? The answer is everything—our bodies, minds, talents, families; the world, the air, the sun, the water; and most of all, Jesus. Paul sums it up when he asks, “What have you that you did not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

To us in North America these gifts are abundant. If we lived in Africa we would be glad for an education, if in India for daily food, if in China for freedom to worship and to have more than one child, if in the Middle East for peace. Yet all these privileges we have here in excess.

So what should we do with them? Hoard them, and try to take them down with us to Hell (Luke 12:20)? Or recognize who gave them to us and has entrusted us with their use?

Many of us will be singing today, “All things come from thee, and of thy own have we given thee” (1 Chronicles 29:14). May we truly mean it and show how much we appreciate what we have!

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalms 93, 96; Acts 13:1-12

Monday, June 15

Matthew 17:14-21 *And Jesus answered, “O faithless and perverse generation...Bring him here to me.”* (v.17)

Jesus was disturbed! Here was a caring father who had brought his troubled son to the disciples, and they had failed to help him. Why? Was it because the father had assumed it was enough to bring his son to the disciples and not to Jesus himself? Or was it because the disciples had presumed they could take the place of Jesus and cure the boy? Perhaps it was because they had little faith (v.20)? Maybe it was all of these.

But what about us? Are we disturbing Jesus? Are we assuming that by coming to church we are actually coming to him? Are we making the church a substitute for Jesus? And are we attempting good works without faith in him, and without—as in some versions of verse 21—going to the trouble of fasting? But let's beware of having faith in faith, or even in fasting! It must be in Jesus alone.

Lord, we want to believe. Please help our unbelief.

Numbers 9:15-23; 10:29-36; Psalm 80; Romans 1:1-15

Tuesday, June 16

Matthew 17:22-27 *“However, not to give offense to them...”* (v.27)

Taxation was a hot issue then as now. Status and exemptions were keenly debated. And people grabbed everything available.

As the Son of God, Jesus could have claimed immunity from this temple-tax. But he humbled himself and paid it. That reminds us of Philippians 2:5-7 which points out that “though he was in the form of God, (he) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” In surrendering his rights, he set an example for us to copy. And he also showed us his power.

Is this an odd incident? Yes. But, as someone said, “This fish puts to shame those of us who have nothing in our mouths for the Lord!” Can’t we praise him with ours today?

And like Jesus, let’s not stand on our rights, but be sensitive and accommodating to others. For God has blessed us that we may freely distribute!

Numbers 11:1-23; Psalm 78:1-39; Romans 1:16-25

Wednesday, June 17

Matthew 18:1-9 *“Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* (v.4)

The disciples had a commendable question. They wanted to know who would be the greatest in heaven. But Jesus had a surprising answer. He took a child and, setting him in their midst, used him as an object lesson.

Every day Jesus puts children into homes. We notice their love and trust and obedience, their cheerfulness and innocence. But Jesus points out their humility. He says that that makes them great. And he asks us to copy them.

Is it easy? I think it’s about the hardest task in the world. For pride is subtle. It creeps into our worship and hardens it. It seeps into our virtues and sours them. We can even have pride in our humility! Did you hear about the man who was given a medal because of his humility? The donors took it away when he started to wear it!

Sometimes we have to be humbled by being humiliated. How much easier it would be if we just admitted that Jesus is Lord of all and knelt before him!

Numbers 11:24-35; Psalm 119:97-120; Romans 1:28—2:11

Thursday, June 18

Matthew 18:10-20 *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.”* (v.15a)

When someone hurts us, our common reaction is to tell other people. By doing that we get their sympathy and support. But we also spread the poison.

Jesus tells us to confront the offending person directly and privately. That’s called walking in the light (1 John 1:7). By doing so, we show trust in each other, we share our temptations and trials, we get a clearer insight into one another’s nature, and we clear up misconceptions about motives and methods. And we don’t let the poison spread.

Of course it’s difficult. It takes courage to confront him or her and tell them we have been hurt. But besides keeping the problem confined to a small circle, it enables quicker healing. And it’s what Jesus commands.

Who has sinned against you whom you need to confront, humbly and prayerfully, today?

Numbers 12:1-16; Psalm 83; Romans 2:12-24

Friday, June 19

Matthew 18:21-35 *Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”* (v.21)

Just like many of us, Peter had followed the Lord for some time. And he may have thought he had grown in goodness. So, he even extended the rabbis’ standard of forgiveness from three to seven times, and probably expected to be complimented by Jesus.

We too may feel we are going beyond the norm in what we give and forgive. Note that Peter doesn’t imagine he could be the sinner; it’s his brother he has to watch! And aren’t we guilty of that too?

In any case, Jesus challenges him. He enlarges the forgiving to 490 times—that is, beyond counting. And why? The story that follows tells of a man who had been forgiven a huge sum of money and then went out and hammered someone who owed him a pittance. God has forgiven us thousands of times—removing our mountain of sins by his death on Calvary.

Should we then turn around and slam someone for raising a molehill against us?

Numbers 13:1-3, 21-30; Psalm 88; Romans 2:25—3:8

Saturday, June 20

Matthew 19:1-12 *“What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (v.6b)

As goes the home, so goes the nation. That should cause us to worry! For we are in a bad state.

Divorce is rampant. Men and women are living together in unsanctified unions. They are quick to take offense and slow to forgive. Children growing up with just one parent are at greater risk of sexual temptation and perversion. Without good role models, they easily perpetuate the painful cycle that they themselves experienced. We simply don’t trust each other. Those