

FEBRUARY 19, 2017



SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



LEVITICUS 19:1-2, 17-18

PSALM 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-23

MATTHEW 5:38-48

REFLECTION

One summer night in 1987, Rev. Walter Everett, a United Methodist minister, received the call. His son Scott had locked himself out of his apartment that night and had been banging on the door for someone to let him in. A neighbor, Mike, was in a nearby apartment, paranoid and hallucinating due to the crack cocaine and alcohol that coursed through his body. He came out of his apartment and fired a gun at Scott, killing the twenty four-year-old in the process. For a year, Walter steamed with rage at the murder of his son. At the sentencing hearing, Walter heard a bit of sincere remorse in an apology from Mike. In that moment, Walter realized that if he was ever going to heal, he needed to put the anger and desire for revenge behind him. He started writing to Mike in prison; the two corresponded over the next couple of years. Walter even began to visit Mike in prison. The writing and the visits helped Walter to work through his pain and anguish. He eventually forgave Mike. At Mike's parole hearing, Walter testified on his behalf. With Walter's help, the incarcerated man who had killed his son was released from prison prior to the completion of his sentence. Some years later, with Mike clean and free in more ways than one, Walter officiated the wedding between Mike and his bride. Today, the two men speak regularly to groups of people about their story of reconciliation and how Walter had to actively work to forgive his enemy.

ACTION

Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights (MVFHR) is an international organization of which Walter Everett is a member. The organization's mission statement states: "MVFHR is an international, non-governmental organization of family members of murder victims and family members of the executed, all of whom oppose the death penalty in all cases. We view the death penalty as a profound violation of human rights" (for details, visit www.mvfhr.org). Spend some time reading the stories of some of the members of MVFHR at www.mvfhr.org/victims-stories and pay attention to your thoughts and emotions as you read.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

● Reflect upon your life. With whom have you had a conflict? Is there opportunity for forgiveness within a broken relationship? Can you seek reconciliation with someone who has wronged you?