

This is the Day...Thursday

January 20, 2022

Struck Out

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” (Matthew 18:21-22)

As softball players go, I was pretty good as a young teenager. I played left field on the Loray Baptist Church youth softball team. My fielding skills were excellent. I prided myself on catching any ball that was hit even remotely close to me. I was a fast runner in those days and could track down most of the pop-flys. However, my batting technique needed some help. Occasionally I would get a good, solid hit into the outfield, but most of my hits were slow ground balls that were easily fielded by the opponent. And, at times, I would swing and miss the ball completely.

One of my most embarrassing moments as a ball player occurred at the end of one of our games. The score was tied, and the bases were loaded. It was my turn to bat and all I needed to do was get a hit and we would win the game. Determined to be the hero, I stepped into the batter’s box with a smile as if I was filled with confidence. Then the pitcher lobbed up the first pitch. I swung with all my strength, “Strike One!” After I gathered myself and took a deep breath, another pitch came. Again, I gave a big swing through nothing but air. “Strike Two!” At this point, I was scared to death. I stepped out of the batter’s box to gain some composure. As I stepped back into place and raised my bat, I was thinking to myself, “Just make contact. Just hit the ball. Even a slow grounder would be better than a strike out.” Here came the pitch, I tentatively swung the bat, watching the ball with total concentration. Then I heard it, “Strike Three! You’re Out!” As I walked back to the bench, filled with embarrassment, my head down and dragging my bat behind me, someone from the other team yelled out, “Too bad you don’t get more strikes!”

I am so thankful that God’s rules are not the same as softball rules. Where would you and I be if God only gave us three strikes? Three mistakes and you are out! You can stay in the game with two sins, but that third one is it! That is not how God’s forgiveness works and that is not how God wants us to offer our forgiveness to others. In softball, three strikes are plenty. Peter thought that seven strikes was plenty. But Jesus made it clear that there is no limit to the forgiveness we receive and there is no limit to the forgiveness we should offer others. As you forgive, you will be forgiven. On this day God has given you, be forgiven and offer your forgiveness to others. There are no strike outs in the kingdom of God.