

Sunday September 13th 2020 WORSHIP AT HOME: Matthew 18.21-35

Welcome to our act of Worship

Theme: *'Sorry seems to be the hardest word...'*

Call to worship

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

⁸ The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love towards those who
fear him;

¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.

¹³ As a father has compassion for his children,
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear
him... *Psalms 103, selected verses*

HYMN:

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven T same

To His feet thy tribute bring
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven
Who like thee His praise should sing?
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise Him for His grace and favour
To our fathers in distress
Praise Him, still the same forever
Slow to chide, and swift to bless
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Glorious in His faithfulness.

Father-like, He tends and spares us
Well our feeble frame He knows;
In His hands He gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Widely as His mercy flows.

Angels in the height, adore Him;
Ye behold Him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before Him,
Dwellers all in time and space.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise with us the God of grace!
HP13, MP560, RS104, STF83

Prayers of Praise – based on Ps103

God is slow to anger and merciful:

Praise God!

God does not deal with us according to our sins:

Praise God!

God heals and restores us:

Praise God!

God loves us with a love that is immeasurable:

Praise God!

God's love is beyond time:

Praise God!

God's love will last for ever:

Praise God! Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Gracious God,
where you have been merciful, we have been
merciless;
where you have been generous, we have been
grudging;
where you have been forgiving, we have been
hard-hearted.

(Silence)

We are ashamed and turn to you now,
trusting in your compassion and longing to begin
again in the name, and following the example, of
Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

HYMN

The kingdom of God is justice and joy T Tetherdown

for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace;
the captives are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share;
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice:
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross:
our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal;

in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole.
The heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call
and all things cry 'Glory!'
to God all in all.
HP139, MP651, RS200, STF255

Ministry of the Word of God

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 19 Year A
Genesis 50.15-21; Psalm 103.(1-7),8-13;
Romans 14.1-12;

GOSPEL Matthew 18.21-35

21 Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' ²²Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

23 'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything."²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe."²⁹Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you."³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?"³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

This is the Gospel of Christ.
Praise to Christ our Lord.

TEXT v21 Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?'

Reflection

"You not only forgive, you forget" said the elderly man, his brows very firmly set. He should know, it happened over 35 years ago on New Year's Eve. The man lived opposite the Church where there was to be a Watchnight Service (held around midnight to review the past twelve months whilst also heralding the New Year). He had gone early to open the building and his wife and sister were to follow, but never arrived – a speeding motorist killed both as they were crossing the road.

In all the years I knew that man he never displayed any malice towards the speeding motorist. An incredible act of forgiveness! ... "You not only forgive, you forget".

Our Gospel reading has forgiveness at its heart. **'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?'** Peter not only asks the question but makes a proposal suggesting that forgiveness might be as straightforward as taking a week's medication: once daily for seven days. But if we are counting, then have we completely forgiven even once!

Jesus' response to Peter's question (including the parable) takes forgiveness out of the "countable" category and places it into the realm of the incalculable. The forgiveness to which Jesus points is beyond one's capacity to keep tabs on, beyond one's capacity to offer on their own strength or ability. It is God's compassion and abundant mercy that make forgiveness possible, whether transgressions are large or small.

There is an irony that Peter who suggests a low cap on the number of times he should forgive will be the one who will need great forgiveness from Jesus! Peter's ignorance of his need provides a caution for Christians today. Do we recognise the ways that we harm others? How might we become as aware of our own capacity to sin against others as we are of the capacities of others to sin against us?

Let us be honest, our ability to forgive does not always come easily, nor is it necessarily a quick or simple process. At times it is necessary to "forgive

from a distance". Some wounds are so deep, some "debts" so large, that human forgiveness is next to impossible. Peter's question, "How often should I forgive?" and Jesus' answer "Seventy times seven" (or "seventy-seven times") suggest that forgiveness may well be a long and difficult process rather than the week-long project initially proposed by Peter.

Even when our own efforts fall short, God's mercy is beyond imagining. This is a truth proclaimed by today's parable as well as by the testimony of Jesus' own life and ministry. For on the night when Judas will betray him and Peter and the other disciples will abandon him, Jesus announces to all, "**This is the blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins**" (Matthew 26:28).

Prayer of Response

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.

Amen. *Book of Hours 1514*

HYMN

'Forgive our sins as we forgive,' T St Bernard
you taught us, Lord, to pray,
but you alone can grant us grace
to live the words we say.

How can your pardon reach and bless
the unforgiving heart,
that broods on wrongs and will not let
old bitterness depart?

In blazing light your cross reveals
the truth we dimly knew:
what trivial debts are owed to us,
how great our debt to you!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls,
and bid resentment cease;
then, bound to all in bonds of love,
our lives will spread your peace.
HP134, MP-, RS84, STF423

Little people may prefer

(to the tune of *Away in a manger*)

I'm sorry, Lord Jesus, for every bad thing,
I say and I do, and the hurt that I bring.

Forgive me, Lord Jesus, I'm trying to show,
Your kindness and patience wherever I go.

So thank you, Lord Jesus, for giving me peace,
For love and for joy that will only increase.
I'm forgiven by Jesus, and ready to be,
So friendly and helpful, a gentler me.

Our Prayers

Loving God, we pray for the worldwide church in
all its diversity, and we bring before you situations
where this diversity has resulted in argument and
broken relationships...

Heal misunderstandings and encourage mutual
respect, that your loving grace may be more fully
revealed.

Merciful and gracious God:

make known your ways to all people.

Forgiving God, we pray for the nations of the world
in all their variety and we bring before you those
places where variety is a source of friction and
violence...

Forgive our intolerance of those who differ from
us, and bless those actions that foster peace and
reconciliation, that your saving grace may be more
fully revealed.

Merciful and gracious God:

make known your ways to all people.

Steadfast God, we pray for the community in
which we live, and for the resources we share and
hold in common. We pray for work places and
homes where trust has broken down and
unkindness holds sway...

Stay faithful when we are unfaithful, that your
unfailing grace may be more fully revealed.

Merciful and gracious God:

make known your ways to all people.

Compassionate God, we bring before you all who
suffer in any way and especially those who suffer
through broken relationships and lack of
forgiveness. We hold before you those in our own
hearts who are in any sort of pain...

Bring care and wholeness to all who suffer, that
your healing grace may be more fully revealed.

Merciful and gracious God:

make known your ways to all people.

Everlasting God, we pray for those who have died,
and especially for those who have died lacking love
and forgiveness. We hold before you all those we

have loved and see no more, and the recently departed...
May we come to know more fully the mercy and grace of your eternal kingdom.
Merciful and gracious God:
make known your ways to all people.

We offer these prayers in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, whose example of loving forgiveness we seek to follow. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HYMN

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, T Repton
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;

let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!
HP673, MP111, RS492, STF495

Blessing

Eternal God,
slow to anger and swift to forgive,
fill our lives with the loving energy
of your compassionate Spirit. **Amen.**
And may the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son
and Holy Spirit, be with you and all whom you love
and those whom you ought to love, now and
always. **Amen.**

Rev David Coppard Superintendent @ Wiltshire
United Area
Bank Chaplain @ Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton

Our churches may not all be open, but the Church is active and alive.

This is service is offered to any and all, with love and prayers.

For the week ahead:

Quietly and slowly pray these words from the Lord's Prayer in the version which you are most familiar with. Pause and reflect on "my sins/my trespasses" and again – maybe for longer, on "I forgive those who sin against me/I forgive those who trespass against me".

Father, forgive me my sins as I forgive those who sin against me. Amen.

or

Father, forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me. Amen.

CCL LICENCE
Steeple Ashton Methodist CCL 291605
Warminster United CCL 1221052
Westbury Methodist CCL 781988
Westbury URC CCL 293641