



Worship at Home : Sunday 13th September

The Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity

Preparation

Greeting

The minister welcomes the people with a greeting, which may include

Grace, mercy and peace

from God our Father

and the Lord Jesus Christ

be with you

Prayers of Penitence

Lord God,

we have sinned against you;

we have done evil in your sight.

We are sorry and repent.

Have mercy on us according to your love.

Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.

Renew a right spirit within us

and restore to us the joy of your salvation,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from *our* sins,
and restore *us* in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.
Praise

Let everything be said and done in the name of the
Lord Jesus,

All giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.

Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

All let us sing to God with thankful hearts.

Open our lips, Lord:

All and we shall praise your name.

Venite – a Song of Triumph

- 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord; ♦
let us heartily rejoice in the rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving ♦
and be glad in him with psalms.
- 3 For the Lord is a great God ♦
and a great king above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth ♦
and the heights of the mountains are his also.
- 5 The sea is his, for he made it, ♦
and his hands have moulded the dry land.
- 6 Come, let us worship and bow down ♦
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
- 7 For he is our God; ♦
we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Word

Psalm 114.

God's Wonders at the Exodus

- ¹ When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
² Judah became God's^[a] sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.
³ The sea looked and fled;
Jordan turned back.
⁴ The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.
⁵ Why is it, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?
⁶ O mountains, that you skip like rams?
O hills, like lambs?
⁷ Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
⁸ who turns the rock into a pool of water,
the flint into a spring of water.

Reading(s)

Genesis 50: 15-21

Realising that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Romans 14 verses 1-12 : Do not Judge one another

14 Welcome those who are weak in faith,^[a] but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who

abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord^[b] is able to make them stand.

⁵Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?^[c] Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?^[d] For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.^[e] ¹¹For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to^[f] God.”

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.^[g]

After each reading this response may be used

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Matthew 18 verses 21-35

Forgiveness

²¹Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church^[a] 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^[b] times.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

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^[c] 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;^[j] and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister^[k] from your heart."

Sermon

How good are you at forgiving someone who has truly and deeply hurt you or caused you, or someone you love harm? I imagine we've all had encounters or events that have left a deep mark on our lives, perhaps cause us to have heavy hearts and deep sorrow or anger (or perhaps both). Today's readings can cause a deep disturbance in any of us who have experienced such deeply painful events and are still struggling, consciously or unconsciously, to process their effect. More so even if you struggle to think in terms of how, or why, you would ever want to forgive. Some things just feel unforgiveable...

Last week we heard of Matthew's instructions to the Church, voiced by Christ. Advice on how to call another who sins to account, to challenge them to change. That advice guided us through distinct stages, depending on the response of the one being challenged. This week is more about what happens after that, and how you reconcile the individuals concerned, or the person and the affected community. In other words, how to go on living in love after the fall out!

And yet in our Old Testament reading, chosen to balance the Gospel, we have the long story of family reconciliation that is Joseph's story. He of the Lloyd Webber Musical 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' fame (a favourite of mine having sung in it at school). He of the brightly coloured robe, the favourite son of Jacob, the dreamer whose prophecies later made him a man with immense power and influence. Here we come into the story as Jacob's life has ended, and meet Joseph's brothers suddenly fearful in case, to spare their father's feelings, Joseph has been playing a long game on revenge.

Goodness knows, Joseph might have had cause to wish his brothers ill, and even punish them: these brothers who, out of jealousy, had set upon him as a 17-year old intending to kill him, or at least leave him to die alone in the desert, abandoned without food or water, before a chance intervention led them to sell him into slavery instead! Those brothers who had later taken his stained and bloodied robe back to their father and declared him missing presumed dead, causing Jacob untold grief! Their devious behaviour led to Joseph becoming a servant of Potiphar, who served Egypt's Pharaoh. If you've forgotten the story, or never read it, it's a fabulous, intricate story, played out over nine chapters of Genesis, with many twists and turns along the way, in which his brothers eventually come to his door (not knowing it was him) seeking help in a time of famine. He provides for them and, after giving them a little scare, he reveals his true identity to them, and subsequently is joyously reunited with his father.

The Joseph we meet was gracious, generous, loving and forgiving- when he could have hardened his heart and repaid those brothers like for like. His words show that he understood what had happened then, and after, as God's plan and promised to provide for the brothers that sought his support on behalf of many families back home, saying "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant of earth and to keep alive for you many survivors".

And so back to Matthew, and to our need, our call to practice the art of forgiveness after the example of Christ. And, as we so often pray, in preparation for meeting Christ in bread and wine, we come up against the gospel imperative: 'forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us'. The ultimate example of paying it forward- we are forgiven, so we are to forgive others. How then shall we forgive? This story says time and again... and again.

These instructions should be remembered in the context of what came before because this is not just a sweeping under the carpet, neglecting the victim, the betrayed, the one treated unjustly. Because in the context of last week's gospel, the wider community continues to challenge the individual or group (the perpetrator, if you like) whose acts and behaviours that cause the hurt, pain and loss. Even Joseph gave his brother's a salutary experience, a limited taste of their own medicine, before he revealed to them his true identity! No wonder they were a little anxious of whether more was to come, once their father died. It's a shame the slave who had his debt of 10,000 talents forgiven, chose not to pay it forward when meeting those who still owed him a much smaller debt!

Last week, Alan mentioned Archbishop Desmond Tutu's work to restore a more just culture in South Africa through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation committee. An example that resonates with me, growing up and visiting N Ireland throughout "The Troubles", is how a similar process was utilised in making the peace that became the Good Friday Agreement. The simple concept at the heart of both, and other such schemes, was to enable restorative justice so stories of each could be voiced and heard, bringing the validation that enabled healing to begin. When so many acts of violence and terror still happen across the world, so much greed, selfishness, so many stories of hurt and pain. It's easy to become stunned and lose our sense of agency to change any of it. If only we, humanity, could learn how to not begin a new cycle of pain!

The big stuff out there can crowd out our recognition of the honest need to forgive, and be forgiven, for the small or large ways in which we as individuals hurt each other. There is no shortcut, there is almost always a process of recognition, acknowledgement, letting go, of letting God's healing grace in, to bring light to the darkness that gathers around the despair of deep, unresolved pain. Christ taught us this from the cross itself; and is with us bringing us through time and again: his presence of Love under and over us, on our right and left side, our shield and the light in our darkness.

Amen.

Reverend Judy Miller

Forgiveness



When a deep injury is done to us, we never heal until we forgive.

Nelson Mandela

If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive.

Mother Theresa

Apostles' Creed

This, or an authorized Affirmation of Faith, is used.

All I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

That this day may be holy, good and joyful:

All we pray to you, O Lord.

That we may offer to you our worship and our work:

All we pray to you, O Lord.

That we may strive for the well-being of all creation:

All we pray to you, O Lord.

That in the pleasures and pains of life,
we may know the love of Christ and be thankful:

All we pray to you, O Lord.

That we may be bound together by your Holy Spirit,
in communion with [N and with] all your saints,
entrusting one another and all our life to Christ:

All we pray to you, O Lord.

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Open prayer may be offered and silence is kept.

The Collect

Merciful God,
Your Son came to save us
And bore our sins on the cross:
May we trust in your mercy
And know your love,
Rejoicing in the righteousness that is ours
Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

Conclusion

A blessing may be given.

The service ends with the Grace, or another ending.

All The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore.

Amen.