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Service for the 14th Sunday after Trinity, 13th September 2020

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

The theme of today's service is FORGIVENESS

CALL TO WORSHIP: Verses from Psalm 103

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 plenteous in mercy.

¹⁰ He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us according to our sins and wrongs.

So let us bring our praise and thanksgiving in our first hymn....

HYMN: My God, how wonderful

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 My God, how wonderful thou art,
thy majesty how bright!
How beautiful thy mercy seat,
in depths of burning light!

2 How wonderful, how wonderful
the sight of thee must be,
thine endless wisdom, boundless power,
and awesome purity!

3 O how I fear thee, living God,
with deepest, tend'rest fears,
and worship thee with trembling hope
and penitential tears!

4 No earthly father loves like thee,
no mother half so mild
bears and forbears, as thou hast done
with me, thy sinful child.

5 Yet I may love thee too, O Lord,
almighty as thou art,
for thou hast stooped to ask of me
the love of my poor heart.

6 O then this worse than worthless heart
in pity deign to take,
and make it love thee for thyself,
and for thy glory's sake.

7 Father of Jesus, love's reward,
what rapture it will be
to fall and worship at thy throne,
and gaze and gaze on thee!

F W Faber

PRAYERS

Let us pray.

Loving God, we bring You our thanks and praise this day; that we are able to share in worship and fellowship together, as Your people in Your presence.

We thank you for all the ways in which You have been caring for us and leading us through these past months. You have been our strength and support in difficult times, surrounding us with Your love and blessing us with Your peace. We praise You for all that You are and for all that You have done for us.

Bless our coming together now we pray, make Yourself known to us through our readings & prayers and through the sacrament of Holy Communion; that we may be strengthened to serve you more faithfully in the coming days.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and so we pray in the words Jesus taught us...

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.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 50: 15-21 *Joseph reassures his brothers*

¹⁵ After the death of their father, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still hates us and plans to pay us back for all the harm we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph: "Before our father died, ¹⁷ he told us to ask you, 'Please forgive the crime your brothers committed when they wronged you.' Now please forgive us the wrong that we, the servants of your father's God, have done." Joseph cried when he received this message.

¹⁸ Then his brothers themselves came and bowed down before him. "Here we are before you as your slaves," they said.

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid; I can't put myself in the place of God. ²⁰ You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good, in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened. ²¹ You have nothing to fear. I will take care of you and your children." So he reassured them with kind words that touched their hearts.

St Matthew 18: 21-35 *The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant*

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?"

²² "No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven, ²³ because the Kingdom of heaven is like this.

Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. ²⁴ He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of pounds. ²⁵ The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. ²⁶ The servant fell on his knees before the king. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay you everything!'

²⁷ The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.

²⁸ "Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few pounds. He grabbed him and started choking him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he said. ²⁹ His fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!'

³⁰ But he

refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. ³² So he called the servant in. 'You worthless slave!' he said. 'I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. ³³ You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.' ³⁴ The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount."

³⁵ And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Thanks be to God.

HYMN: There's a wideness

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice
which is more than liberty.

2 There is plentiful redemption
through the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the Head.

3 There is grace enough for thousands
of new worlds as great as this;
there is room for fresh creations
in the Lord's unfathomed bliss.

4 For the love of God is broader
than the measures of our mind,
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

5. But we make his love too narrow
by false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness
with a zeal he would not own.

6 If our love were but more simple,
we should take him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined
by the glory of the Lord.

F W Faber (altd)

ADDRESS *Preacher: Mrs Nancy McOnie*

One of the blessings of being on holiday with other members of the family is that we have more time to talk and listen to one another. During our week in Scotland last month, we had some very interesting discussions, some of which included the differences between Christianity and other faiths.

I was able to point out that, as far as I know, Christianity is the only faith that offers us forgiveness. We have a merciful God, as our psalm reminded us. He does not punish us as we deserve, or repay us according to our sins and wrongs. We are forgiven people if we come to God in penitence and faith.

However, our Bible readings today remind us that, as forgiven people, we must also be prepared to forgive others. The story about Joseph forgiving his brothers is one of the loveliest passages in the Old Testament. It speaks of a wisdom and love which, even today, many people would find difficult. Only this week, we have been reminded of the events in New York on 11th September 2001. Even more recently and closer to home, there has been the knife attacks in Birmingham city centre last weekend. How difficult it must be, for those involved, to forgive such actions!

Peter also struggled with the problems of his time as he coped with the Jewish teaching on forgiveness. This simply stated that if someone sinned you must forgive them up to three times. Peter obviously saw that Jesus wanted to go further than that. He thought he was being generous in suggesting seven times rather than three. But Jesus would not put a limit on forgiveness: seventy times seven means without limit. The story He told brought home the message of how dangerous it can be if we will not learn to forgive one another. Holding on to bitterness and resentment about past events, refusing to forgive and forget, can actually affect our health and our enjoyment of life.

God in Christ offers us redemption and forgiveness. I still turn frequently to Rembrandt's beautiful painting 'The return of the Prodigal Son' because he expressed so well the tender love of the father and the very human condition of the son. Perhaps it is only when we truly appreciate just how much we are loved by God that we are enabled to show our love and forgiveness towards others.

As Samuel Davies wrote in one of his hymns...

In wonder lost, with trembling joy
We take the pardon of our God.

It is in this sense of gratitude that we are enabled to pray "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us".

Thanks be to God. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray

Lord, You have opened Your arms for us on the cross; You welcome us into Your kingdom. May Your saving power be known among us and lead us into the ways of peace.

Gracious God, we pray today for the Church in all parts of the world. May we always be welcoming, even in these difficult times; may we draw others to You by our love and understanding.

Help us to reach out to all who are in need at this time, especially to any who find faith difficult. Teach us to be forgiving to others as we seek forgiveness from You.

We remember and pray for all who face financial problems, those who have been made redundant, and all who are in debt.

We pray also for those whose lives are diminished by the present situation, all who are afraid to venture out into society again, all those who are lonely and missing the company of family & friends.

We pray for members and friends of our own congregation; for those who are ill and for all who mourn the loss of a loved one.

Generous God, hold in Your love and care all who are in need today.

We pray for all who have gone before us and who now live in a greater light and glory. May we be found worthy to share with them the joys of Your eternal kingdom.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**

HYMN: Be known to us

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment

1 Be known to us in breaking bread,
but do not then depart;
Saviour, abide with us, and spread
your table in our heart.

2 Here sup with us, in love divine,
your body and your blood,
that living bread, that heavenly wine
be our immortal food.

James Montgomery (altd)

HOLY COMMUNION

A prayer of confession

Humbly and sorrowfully, we long for Your forgiveness, loving God....
for every weakening thought to which our minds have wandered;
for every thoughtless word, spoken in the heat of the moment;
for every failure of self-control;
for all the faults we cannot forget.

Help us to know Your forgiveness and acceptance. Help us to let go of the past and to live
from now on for all that is good and right.

Grant, we beseech You, merciful Lord, to Your faithful people pardon and peace; that we
may be cleansed from all our sins and serve You with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our
Lord. **Amen.**

*If you have bread and wine or juice to use as Communion elements,
please have them ready now.....*

Let us celebrate this joyful feast! People will come from east and west, from north and
south, and sit at table in the Kingdom of God.

Let us hear the gracious words with which our Lord Jesus bids us come to Him, that you may
draw near in full assurance of faith.

Jesus said "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever
believes in me will never be thirsty. Anyone who comes to me, I will never turn away."

Let us hear the story of how this sacrament began. On the night in which Jesus was
betrayed, He sat at supper with His disciples. While they were eating, He took a piece of
bread, said a blessing, broke it and gave it to them with the words:

"This is my body. It is broken for you. Do this to remember me."

Later, He took a cup of wine, saying:

"This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Drink from it, all of you, to
remember me."

So now, following Jesus' example and command, we take this bread and wine, the ordinary
things of the world, which Christ will make special; and as He said a prayer before sharing,
let us do so too.

Let us pray

Loving God, we give You thanks and praise that You loved the world so much that You gave
Your only Son, so that everyone who has faith in Him may not die but have eternal life.

We thank You that you offer not only bread and wine but Your very self, that we may be filled, forgiven, healed and blessed. We join with all Your people in heaven and on earth to sing Your praise.

Lord Jesus, present with us now, for all that You have done and all that You have promised, what have we to offer? Our hands are empty, our hearts are sometimes full of wrong things. We are not fit to gather up the crumbs from under your table. But with you is mercy and the power to change us. So, as we do now what You did in an upstairs room, send down Your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine; that they may become for us symbols of Your body – healing, forgiving and making us whole, loving and caring in the world until Your kingdom comes. **Amen.**

Jesus took bread, broke it and said:

“This is my body, it is broken for you; do this to remember me.”

Eat and remember....

Later, He took the cup of wine and said “This is the new relationship with God, made possible because of my death; take this, all of you.”

Drink and remember....

Let us pray

We thank You, Father, that You have fed us in this sacrament, united us with Christ and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, prepared for all people. To You be glory and praise. **Amen.**

HYMN: Forth in thy name

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go,
my daily labour to pursue,
thee, only thee, resolved to know
in all I think, or speak, or do.

2 The task thy wisdom hath assigned
O let me cheerfully fulfil,
in all my works thy presence find,
and prove thy good and perfect will.

3 Thee may I set at my right hand,
whose eyes mine inmost substance see,
and labour on at thy command,
and offer all my works to thee.

4 Give me to bear thy easy yoke,
and every moment watch and pray,
and still to things eternal look,
and hasten to thy glorious day;

5 For thee delightfully employ
whate'er thy bounteous grace has given,
and run my course with even joy,
and closely walk with thee to heaven.

Charles Wesley (altd)

BLESSING

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**

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