



The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

Sunday 13 September 2020 Trinity 14

Preparation

Be with us, Spirit of God:

Nothing can separate us from your love.

Breathe on us, breath of God;

fill us with your saving power.

Speak in us, wisdom of God;

bring strength, healing and peace

The Greeting

The Lord is here

His Spirit is with us.

Silence is kept

Praise from Psalm 34

I will bless the Lord at all times

God's praise is always on my lips; Glorify the Lord with me,

Together let us praise God's name

The Lord is close to the broken hearted. Blessed be the Lord

I sought the Lord and was heard; from all my terrors set free

When the poor cry out the Lord hears them

And rescues them from all their distress.

The Lord is close to the broken hearted;

Those whose spirit is crushed, God will save.

Many are the trials of the upright

But the Lord will come to rescue them.

The Lord is close to the broken hearted. Blessed be the Lord

Prayers of Penitence

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;

A broken and contrite heart God will not despise.

Our sins accuse us. We confess them to God.

Confession

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

God of mercy,

We acknowledge that we are all sinners

We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done,

And are mindful of all that we have failed to do.

For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,

Forgive us all that is past,

And help us to live each day

In the light of Christ our Lord. Amen

May God our Father forgive us our sins

And bring us to the eternal joy of his kingdom,

Where dust and ashes have no dominion. **Amen.**

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.**

The Readings

The First Reading: **Romans 14:1-12**

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some 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. Those 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.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If 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. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.” So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

This is the word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**

The Second Reading: Matthew 18:21-35

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?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

‘For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, 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. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But 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.” Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.” But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. 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. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?” And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So 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 the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Reflection from Chris Wilcock

This week we tackle one of the most difficult things, we as human beings have to face in our lives – forgiveness.

St. Augustine of Hippo had this to say on the subject of forgiveness – “There are many kinds of alms, the giving of which helps us to obtain pardon for our sins;

but none is greater than that by which we forgive from our heart a sin that someone has committed against us.”

I think it true to say that none of us can go through life without getting hurt. And the big question is, how do we cope with these hurts? They can provide us with an opportunity to grow, or they can become a stumbling block to human and spiritual development.

Hurts are not easy to deal with because as soon as we get hurt self-pity walks in our front door. And that’s only natural. But once we entertain self-pity it only goes to produce a legacy of bitterness, resentment and anger. The memory of wrongs done to us flows inwards where it festers. It poisons our spirit and destroys our capacity to love.

Some people have years of stored hurts inside them.

For some time now we have been promising ourselves a good session at clearing out our loft. Every time I have to go up for something I see boxes containing goodness knows what, redundant computers and TVs that we will never watch again. And every time I say to myself why, oh, why have we stored these things for so long. We need to have a good clear out.

From time to time the loft of our hearts and minds needs a good clear out. The cobwebs of self-pity need to be swept away. The cancerous growth of bitterness has to be cut out. Hurt feelings have to be dug up, owned and then let go.

And here’s where forgiveness comes in. Though it’s never easy, even from a human point of view it makes great sense. If we rid ourselves of the burden of bitterness and resentment we will experience a sense of freedom, relief and cleanliness. If we do this then we are once again able to devote our energies to loving, which is the only activity which befits a Christian.

Forgiveness is first and foremost a healing of our own hearts. Forgiveness implies an understanding of our own poverty, brokenness and sin, and therefore our own need of forgiveness. This enables us to forgive with understanding and humility. To forgive in a high-handed way is not a Christian way to forgive. We have to be willing to admit that we may have been at least partly to blame for what happened. It is not good enough to forgive in word. We must forgive, as the Gospel says, from the heart.

It is not a question of forgiving if and when the offender repents – that would be relatively easy. We are expected to forgive even if the offender doesn’t repent – and this is what makes it so difficult, and why we need God’s grace.

According to an ancient legend Christ assembled the eleven apostles in heaven and asked them to celebrate the Last Supper with him. They readily agreed. On their arrival he welcomed them and asked them to take their seats. They were surprised to find that he had set out thirteen seats. Even though everything was ready he refused to start. He waited and waited until finally Judas came in. On seeing him, Christ rose from his seat and went to meet him. He kissed him and said, 'We have waited for you'.

Now, this story may seem far-fetched. But does it do anything more than echo that other story we find in Luke's Gospel – the story of how, as he hung on the cross, Jesus prayed for his executioners?

By word and example, Christ teaches us how to forgive.

Forgiveness clears a path for God to forgive us. The only obstacle we can put in the way of God's forgiveness of our sins is our inability to forgive the sins of others. We all need forgiveness. To quote George Herbert, 'He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself.'

Blessed are those who forgive, they shall obtain forgiveness for their own sins.

Forgiveness

When we forgive we free ourselves of the burden of bitterness,
and we free the other person of the burden of guilt.

But our forgiveness must come from the heart,
which means it must be true, sincere and warm.

A cold forgiveness is not much use.

Forgiveness should start now.

Putting it off only deepens the wound,
prolongs bitterness and postpones happiness.

Life is short, time is fleeting.

Today is the day to forgive.

Lord, deliver us from the poison of bitterness,
and give us the grace to forgive from the heart
those who have offended us.

Then we will know the warmth of your forgiveness.

(Flor McCarthy, SDB)

Affirmation of Faith

We say together in faith

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty

Who was, and is, and is to come

We believe in God the Father who created all things:

for by his will they were created and have their being

We believe in God the Son who was slain:

for with his blood, He purchased us for God

From every tribe and language, from every people and nation.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:

the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"

Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Praise response

This is love, not that we loved God,

But that he loved us and sent his Son.

He is the sacrifice for our sins,

that we might live through him.

If God loves us so much

we ought to love one another.

If we love one another,

God lives in us.

Prayers of Intercession by Pamela Sides

Let us pray.

We give thanks that you are a loving and forgiving God:

In you we can be healed, restored and renewed.

We commit ourselves and all of creation to your saving power and love.

We pray for the people in this world who are treated unjustly, for those who are persecuted because of their beliefs and for those who suffer at the hands of unfair rulers.

We remember our link Diocese in Sudan.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for all leaders as they are charged with making challenging decisions in difficult circumstances.

We remember those who are trying to steer a way through the Covid crisis; protecting the health of the most vulnerable while allowing the economy to recover for the benefit of all.

We remember our own Government as negotiations for Brexit proceed.

We pray for countries who are soon to be holding elections, and that their voters will make wise decisions.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for our local communities.

We remember all the schools as pupils and staff settle into a new term with new and strange routines.

We pray that all the students adapt to learning again, and that those who have struggled with home schooling will return to their full potential.

We pray for local health care services: the hospitals, care homes, medical centres, pharmacies and home care staff.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for those who are suffering in any way. Remembering those with physical or mental illness; those who are affected by poverty; those who are lonely or isolated.

We pray for those facing major changes. We pray for students leaving home, that they will find friendship and support in their new environment. We pray for those unemployed or facing redundancy as the furlough scheme comes to an end.

We pray for those who have been recently bereaved.

We pray for our own families and friends.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We give thanks for the many blessings and the good things in our lives.
We pray for our local clergy, and give thanks for the support and teaching they provide for us.
We give thanks for our local benefice and the fellowship we receive.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, let our memory provide no shelter for grievance against each other.
Lord, let our heart provide no harbour for hatred of each other.
Lord, let our tongue be no accomplice in the judgement of each other.

(Prayer from Celtic Daily Prayer from the Northumbria Community)

Merciful Father,
**Accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son,
Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayers

Lord God, you hold both heaven and earth in a single peace.
Let the design of your great love
Shine on the waste of our anger and sorrow,
And give peace to your Church, peace among nations,
Peace in our homes and peace in our hearts,
In Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,
The power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service,,
The joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**