

Circuit Worship 13 September 2020

Welcome: Welcome everyone to worship.

Call to Worship:

Come to the God who knows us,
to the God who created our being,
to the God who knows our frailty,
to the God who loves and cherishes us beyond measure.
Come as you are and worship God.

Let us pray:

Divine Sculptor you have fashioned the universe and all that is in it. You have created the earth with all its abundance. You have made your people in all our variety and placed us here to act justly and to seek peace. Around us the sights and sounds of nature echo the song of praise your people offer to you for the variety and splendour of the universe.

God of time and eternity, receive our worship and our praise for we ask this in the name of the Saviour who loves us and who came to save the world. Amen.

In the challenges and changes of life that pull us this way and that Lord, we sometimes find it hard, in the heat of the moment, to know what is right and what is wrong.

Forgive us our failings and wrongdoings, forgive our insensitivities to both the ways of others and the ways of your creation, forgive us for being pulled away from you and getting caught up in the ways of the world. Forgive us Lord and help us to keep our eyes and our focus always on you for you are the God who cares for each hair on our head and each breath that we take.

Redeem us once more to yourself we pray and always walk one step ahead of us as we go on our way. This prayer we ask in the name of the Saviour who loves us and who came to save the world. Amen.

Now let us now join together in the prayer our Lord taught us to say:

Traditional Form

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

Modern Form

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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the
power and the glory are
yours now and for ever.
Amen

Our first reading today is a continuation from the Gospel of Matthew. We hear how Peter asks of Jesus how forgiving he must be when a fellow Church member continually wrongs him.

Jesus, in response, turns the question around with a story, and asks Peter to think about just how much mercy he has received himself.

Reading: Matthew 18:21-35
Forgiveness

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?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven 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. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ 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." 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 should 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 should 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 from your heart.'

Our second reading today is related to our theme this month of 'Creation time' and we begin, at the beginning!

Reading: Genesis 1:1-10

***1** In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Hymn: 'God whose almighty word'

1. God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight,
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

2. Christ, you have come to bring
on your redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
O to all humankind,
let there be light!
3. Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving holy Dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light!
4. Blessed and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide,
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide
let there be light!

John Marriott (1780-1825)

REFLECTION: 'Seventy-times-Seven – 490'

I want you to know today that the amount of love that God has for each and every one of us, is as much as the amount of creativity God had when creating the universe and the world of which we are a part. God created the world for the purpose of being in communion with the human race. Scripture tells us, we are created in the image of God, in the image of God, God created us.

Genesis begins with a bang – nothing less than the big bang of creation and the eternal God who caused it.

We go on to read how life on earth is fatally damaged by the rebellion of people against their Creator. We meet the judgment and mercy of God too in the stories that follow.

In the biggest story of all, we read of the redemption of the human race through God's forgiveness – even though God gave his only Son for that purpose.

All through Scripture we hear of God's forgiveness and we too, as disciples of Jesus, are called to forgive.

So, Peter! We can always depend on Peter to ask the question we would like to ask, but haven't the nerve. In his response, Peter obviously thought that seven times was more than generous, and ought to be enough.

You know that feeling when you've come to the end of your tether? What do we say: "Enough is enough" and what we mean by that is that patience is not only wearing thin, but it has a hole in it!

But Jesus' reply to Peter's generous proposal is not seven times, but seventy times seven – which is 490 times!

Could you keep this measure?

But what's the point of this? Jesus was telling Peter, and telling us, about the nature of forgiveness and he does this, as he does on many occasions, with a parable. With the parable of the King and the Servant Jesus is showing us that God's forgiveness is deep. In fact, it cost God the price of His only Son.

God's forgiveness is also wide. In the parable the King forgives the debt of one servant but God's forgiveness is wide enough for all people. It's for us, and for those yet to come; and God's forgiveness is worldwide. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son. God's forgiveness is for all. There is none so evil they can't be saved, none so righteous they need not be saved. God's forgiveness is that wide.

God's forgiveness is not only deep and wide. God's forgiveness is alive it's moving. It flows from God to us through the Holy Spirit. God doesn't limit forgiveness. No limit in depth, no matter the size of the sin. No limit in width, no matter who and where you are and no limit in time. No matter how many times before. God forgives and keeps on forgiving. 490 times, and more. God's forgiveness is alive and moving.

So where do we see God's forgiveness, deep and wide, alive and moving? We see it from the book of Genesis with King David; murderer, adulterer, liar. But God forgave. We see it in Peter, who denied knowing His Saviour and Lord. But God forgave. We see it in Paul, who helped in stoning Stephen and persecuted the Church. But God forgave. God's forgiveness, goes on flowing out to you and me, and to all who have ears to hear and hearts to change. God's forgiveness is as deep as the sword which pierced Christ's side on the cross. Christ's forgiveness flows from his heart to us. It flows to us in His words, *'I forgive you all your sins.'* And as Ezekiel writes, *'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness.... And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.'*

Just as the Holy Spirit swept over the face of the waters at the beginning of all things, so the Holy Spirit can sweep over our lives and remove our stony heart, and given us a new and living heart, and that forgiveness can overflow from us to others.

Our forgiveness is not just for those we like, or we're pleased with, it's for all. Those we know and love. Those we don't. Those we get along with, and those who hurt us. Proverbs says, *'Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.'* It's in our everyday relationships that forgiveness needs to keep on flowing.

In the beginning God created something from nothing and brought order out of chaos. The world we live in was conceived, wanted and brought into existence by God. This is comforting to know and if God can do that, then God can also forgive me for the times when my life is not quite as it should be. I hope you can take comfort from that truth today.

I'll say again what I said at the beginning of my Sermon, the amount of love that God has for each and every one of us, is as much as the amount of creativity God had when creating the universe and the world. God created the world for the purpose of being in communion with the human race. After all, we are created in the image of God, in the image of God, God created us.

May you take that to your heart today and know that you are just as important to God as the world he created. Amen.

For further reflection:

1. Do you honestly believe that God forgives and keeps on forgiving?
2. Do you keep count of how many times you forgive someone?
3. Do you think it helps with forgiveness by the fact that you're a Christian?

Prayers of intercession: Based on Psalm 104

There's a response to our prayers. When I say the words: 'Send forth your Spirit' please respond with **'and renew us'**.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honour and majesty,
wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
you make the winds your messengers,
fire and flame your ministers.
And yet you choose us to serve you here.
Bless all those called to serve your Church,
in particular, those who minister to this congregation.

Send forth your Spirit
and renew us.

You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
And so we pray for all those whose lives are afflicted when the earth shakes,
or when the deep rises up to engulf homes.
In uncertain times, may they know the deep peace of your love.

Send forth your Spirit
and renew us.

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
giving drink to every wild animal.
By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.
For all those who work in conservation
and for the fight to protect this world from greed and abuse,
we ask for your strength and vision.
Send forth your Spirit
and renew us.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.
For everyone that supplies our food,
from farmer to cook,
for the joy of eating well,
we give you thanks,
and pray for all those for whom the next meal is less certain,
where joy is found simply in eating at all.

May the world's resources be used and shared fairly.

Send forth your Spirit
and renew us.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works –
who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Praise the Lord!
Amen and amen.

Hymn: 'God is love, let heaven adore him' (*tune to 'Love Divine'*)

1. God is love: let heaven adore him;
God is love: let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
he who spread the heavens above,
he who breathes through all creation,
he is love, eternal Love.
2. God is love: and he, enfolding
all the world in one embrace,
with unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.
3. God is love: and though with blindness
sin afflicts each human soul,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holds and guides and keeps them whole.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Timothy Rees (1874-1939)

BLESSING:

As we leave this Holy place, this place of Mercy, and Praise, may we be mindful to share in the good news of the mercy that we have received through Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen.

Please be assured that we are still here if you need anything at all during this time. Circuit staff can be contacted by calling 01933 312778 for Rev Lesley Dinham / 01933 622137 for Rev Kim Shorley.

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