

FORTH VALLEY METHODIST CIRCUIT WEEKLY SERVICE

SUNDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2020



Call to Worship

As we are called to come together to worship, we join in the lyrics of [‘Come, now is the time to worship’](#) (StF 24).

If you have your own hymnbook, read the lyrics as a call to worship, or you can click on the link to go to a YouTube video.

Hymn: Blessed be your name (StF 41)

Please follow the hymn in your hymnbook or click on the link to go to a YouTube video.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we praise you for your care for each one of us, Your children. We praise you for the beauty of creation – the calm waters, the rugged hills, the green grass – all speak of your power and majesty. Let us exalt your Name in all the earth.

We thank You for the joy and love of family and friends, we thank You for the skills you have given us, and most of all we thank You for Your love for us which led to You giving Your only Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Friend.

As we make our confession – for our negative and impure thoughts, for our hasty and sometimes cruel words, for our actions which have caused pain, hurt and upset – we depend on the shed blood of Jesus for our forgiveness. Lord, in your mercy forgive us and renew us in our Christian walk. Hear the words of Jesus, ‘your sins are forgiven’.

Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Bibles Readings:

Old Testament:

[Genesis 50.15-21](#)

Gospel:

[Matthew 18.21-35](#)

Other readings

[Romans 14.1-12](#)

[Psalm 103 \(1-7\), 8-13](#)

Please use your own Bible or click on the link to go to the Bible Gateway website.

[Hymn: Forgive our sins as we forgive \(StF 423\)](#)

Please follow the hymn in your hymnbook or click on the link to go to a YouTube video.

Reflection

If you have been hurt (and who hasn't?) you may have found it hard to forgive the person who caused you pain and upset. You want revenge. It turns to anger and you begin to feel hatred towards the person. Living with unforgiveness is not pleasant. It can lead to health problems such as depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, even a higher incidence of heart disease. It is certainly not God's best for us. Forgiveness, on the other hand, releases anger and bitterness, and can improve our relationships with others and with God. Forgiving others also frees us to receive forgiveness.

The description of Joseph's response to his brothers' plea for forgiveness after the death of their father is a good illustration of the principles of forgiveness and tolerance outlined in today's gospel reading. Joseph's brothers had tried to get rid of him, but in God's hands the effect of their action had been quite different. Not only had Joseph himself benefitted immeasurably from what had happened to him, he had been enabled to save his whole family from dying of starvation in a seven-year famine. In the light of the fact that God had shown him such mercy and favour, Joseph regards his brothers' actions as part of the overall divine plan to provide for all of their wellbeing. And if God had treated their actions in this way, who is Joseph to condemn them? He refuses to take on the mantle of judge, recognising that, for all his high earthly status, there is only one who has the right to judge: and that One has judged with mercy.

Our treatment of others should depend not on how they treat us, but on the recognition of how God has treated us; and where God treats us with mercy and even blessing, then we too must be merciful.

The 'Parable of the Unforgiving Servant' is a cautionary tale that follows on from the passage about winning back the fellow Christian who has sinned, and it underlines the necessity of repeated, full and frank forgiveness within the community. The contrast between the debt owed to the king by the servant, and the debt owed to that servant by a fellow servant is so enormous, ridiculous even, and it is clear that whereas the debt to the king could not even begin to be repaid, that owed to the servant could very well be repaid, given a little time and patience. This makes the servant's treatment of his debtor even more reprehensible. In the end it comes down to the idea that, what we owe and what we are owed, are two sides of the same coin. We cannot separate the way we ourselves have been treated by God from the way should treat others in the light of that.

God, in love and mercy, sacrificed His only Son for our forgiveness. We have done nothing to deserve it. And we certainly can never repay the debt for our sins – we rely totally on the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe, because we had a debt we could not pay. Jesus has given us an example to follow – to forgive, forgive and forgive again without keeping a record of wrongs. How many lives and relationships have been wrecked by an unwillingness to forgive? How much hurt are we causing ourselves by

refusing to forgive? As I said at the start it can be hard to forgive but what does forgiveness really involve. Forgiveness requires three basic actions:

First, we surrender our right to get even. Every victim is sure that the offender deserves to suffer at least as much as he has made us suffer. But that isn't necessarily so. "The wages of sin (wronging God) is death" (Romans 6.23), but the payment was made through the death of God's own Son. The blood of Jesus covers all our sins, but each one of us must do personal business with God in order to experience his forgiveness. When we forgive, therefore, we place the outcome of the matter in God's hands and often have to live with the 'debt' being unsettled.

Second, we rediscover the humanity of our wrongdoer. When we have been badly injured and clearly wronged, we define the person who has wronged us by what he did. If he betrayed us, his total being is reduced to his betrayal. When we forgive, we rediscover that the person who wronged us is a complex, weak, confused, fragile person, not so different from us. This is what God does. Our sin hid our faces from Him, now forgiven, we shine like sparkling jewels before him.

Third, we wish our wrongdoer well. We not only surrender our right to revenge him, we desire good things to happen to him. We bless him. Too much to ask of us? Perhaps. And yet this is how God forgives us. He not only surrenders his right to see us punished, He also graces us with whatever blessing is right for us.

Is there someone in your life you are having a hard time forgiving? Remember the precious gift of God's forgiveness to you. As you have received forgiveness you are called to extend forgiveness to others. Ask God to help you forgive, as you have been forgiven. **Amen.**

Prayer of Intercession

O God, our maker, You are worthy of praise and glory from all that dwell in heaven and on earth. You alone called everything into being.

We pray for Your Church that Your children may be one.
We pray for...

Alert us to the needs of others and equip us with the skills to share each other's burdens as well as their joys.
We pray for...

Inspire the leaders of the world. Guide them in them ways of justice and peace.
We pray for...

Inspire us in our relationships with our family and friends. Even though we may be apart for a while, let us always remember to pray for them.
We pray for....

Give us the skills to care for the sick, the sad, the troubled, the lonely, the bereaved.

We pray for...

Heavenly Father, we ask this, and all that we cannot put into words, in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Your Son Jesus Christ, we taught us to pray

**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**

[Hymn: All praise to our redeeming Lord \(StF 608\)](#)

Please follow the hymn in your hymnbook or click on the link to go to a YouTube video.

Blessing

May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. **Amen.**

With thanks to Anne Lochhead for preparing this week's service sheet.