

Home Worship September 13th Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Announcements St. Mark's continues outdoor worship every Sunday in September weather permitting. Please dress accordingly with chair and mask. We continue Food Pantry donations, Neighbors in Need and the September focus is on CROP walk donations.

Confession and forgiveness will be after the Sermon today.

Children's Moment Have you ever played the game Sorry? My brother and I had to play that game with our grandmother when we visited. The idea is that you roll the dice and if your game lands where someone else's game piece is you can send them back home, kick them off the space and you must say "Sorry." Except that you weren't really sorry, because you wanted to win the game. Did you ever have to say you were sorry for hurting someone and so you said it but you didn't mean it? Jesus says that we have to mean we're sorry when we hurt other people and we call it forgiveness. Jesus forgives you when you are wrong and so we have to forgive other people too and we have to mean it. Remember this, God loves you and when you are sorry, God says I still love you always. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Romans 14:1-12

This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.

¹Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ²Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³Those 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 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 honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor 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? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is

written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.”¹² So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 18:21-35 **Glory to you O Lord**

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

²¹Peter came and said to [Jesus], “Lord, if another member of the church 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 times. 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 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; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

The word of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ**

Sermon

Have you ever noticed that some people say “I’m sorry” all the time, even when there is no reason to be sorry. At the same time, there are those who couldn’t forgive, apologize or say “I’m sorry” with real remorse if their life depended on it. When it comes to forgiveness, we all want it, we all need it and yet we do not really understand it.

One thing I have learned in recent years about forgiveness is that forgiveness isn't only for the other person, it's for me!

I have been in abusive relationships, maybe you have been also. Abuse is not always physical. Verbal and emotional abuse from family, friends or others is equally painful and a sin. Forgiveness doesn't remove the consequences of the sin. In 1981, Pope John Paul II was shot. Pope John forgave the man who shot him but the man still went to prison. During the South African *"Truth and Reconciliation Commission"* proceedings, people forgave unspeakable crimes against them. One old woman told the young man who murdered her son how much pain he had caused her, and then she adopted the same young man, (whose parents had also been murdered), She adopted the young man who had set her own son on fire. That is the power of forgiveness!

If I don't forgive, then the things said or done to me make me a "victim", the other person controls my life and calls the shots. I will be a sick person. I refused to be a victim. If I think of myself as a victim, then I will continue to get into relationships where I am the victim. The only way to escape being a victim is to forgive. I didn't go to those who hurt me and say "I forgive you", they didn't even think that they were doing anything wrong, "*they were helping me*". It doesn't matter. Forgiveness sets me free.

In the Lord's Prayer we say "*Forgive us our trespasses (sins, debts) as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" We are not only to forgive our enemies but to love them (Matthew 5:44). Forgiveness does not mean condoning or enabling or forgetting. It does not mean we do not challenge wrongs. But it does mean having an open heart towards those who offend us (Matthew 18:35).

We all like to be on the receiving end of forgiveness; but we are sometimes slow to pardon others. Right now, we are tired of the corona virus and have many different opinions about it. We have many different opinions about political issues especially now when our right to vote is coming soon. Differences do not have to divide. Unfortunately many of us are using our differences to sin against one another by exercising prejudice and judgment. An old friend of mine called last week. I didn't take the call immediately because I needed to pray first to accept our differences. We have many differences. When I called back she was hurting because she hasn't been allowed to see her new grandchild because of religious and politically differences. Forgiveness is needed for this and many others who have sinned against one another in such a time as this.

Peter thought he should forgive seven times. Some translations have Jesus say to forgive "seventy times seven," instead of "seventy-seven times." The Greek is not clear. The point is that it is a lot.

The rest of today's Gospel speaks of the slave who was forgiven a debt of 10,000 talents. In today's currency that would be way over \$1,000,000 (million). The fellow slave was not forgiven a mere 100 denarii which at minimum wage is about \$2000. Forgiveness and lots of it, is synonymous with calling ourselves Christians. Jesus forgave sinners throughout scripture and forgives us now as we forgive those who sin against us.

Forgiveness isn't only for the other person, it's for me! It's for you! We do not need to shout our opinions to the world. We can have them but to allow them to divide is not the call of Christ.

With forgiveness of Christ Jesus I am made free to belong to God the creator. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,

who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. *Silence is kept for reflection.*

Faithful God, have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Forgiveness God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims:

Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. *A brief silence.* You welcome us when we are weak in faith. Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Strengthen faith through Bible studies and Sunday schools, confirmation classes and youth ministries. Nurture new ministries of education and growth. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bring healing and justice wherever harm is dealt. Provide vindication for all who are oppressed. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor; deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger, and guard refugees fleeing famine, poverty, and war. Assist those who battle wild fires in the west and clean up from devastating hurricanes and floods. Help those struggling with the corona virus, for the hospital workers and those developing therapeutics and vaccines.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Teach us to forgive. Remind us that you do not always accuse us. Still our tongues when we are tempted to pass judgment and argue over opinions. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors. Be with those in need of healing: Kent Anders, Karla Gipe and Brad Shippert. For those in care facilities: Sibyl, Barb, Lois, Tammy, Trudy, Jessica, Hazel, Jeanne and Linda. We pray for those in military service: Logan , JJ, Kevin Jr., Bryan, Dustin, Brad and Travis) Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the power of the Holy Spirit we pray as Jesus taught

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

Mothering God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

Thanks be to God.