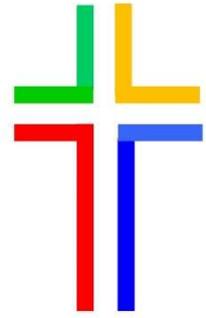


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 13 September



**Our theme today is forgiveness. As the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the church in Colossi ‘Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.’ (Colossians 3:13)**

## **PRAYER**

Lord, we confess that we long to know that we are forgiven; that the slate is wiped clean and we can begin again.

Lord, we confess that though we long to be forgiven we find it so hard to forgive others; that we don’t want to share with others the

**READING FOR TODAY** Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV)

## **The parable of the unmerciful servant**

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’

<sup>22</sup>Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup>‘Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup>As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup>Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup>‘At this the servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” <sup>27</sup>The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

<sup>28</sup>‘But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a

## **REFLECTION**

Let’s start by reflecting on what forgiveness actually is. It is a deliberate act; it is not forgetting about something because it wasn’t significant or something else has become more important. It involves giving up on natural feelings of resentment, of revenge, or of harbouring a grudge. And it involves giving up those feelings even when the person causing the harm doesn’t actually deserve it.

gift which we have received and which like them we do not deserve.

Lord, by your grace apply your forgiveness to our lives that by your Spirit we might become channels of Christ’s cleansing and renewal.

**Amen**

hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded.

<sup>29</sup>‘His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.”

<sup>30</sup>‘But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup>‘Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup>Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” <sup>34</sup>In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

<sup>35</sup>‘This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.’

In our parable from Matthew we can see a different aspect of forgiveness – that because we are forgiven then so should we forgive others. Jesus uses a quite vivid story to bring this point to life. As with most of Jesus’ parables there is a slightly unexpected ending. The disciples may have thought that the servant who had been treated well would go out and treat others the same – but he

didn't, he was most unforgiving – which all heightened the dramatic effect of the parable.

If we are honest with ourselves we can probably think of occasions when we have complained when someone has treated us badly but have then gone and done exactly the same to someone else and felt we were completely in the right.

This conversation was triggered by Peter and Jesus then told this parable for the disciples benefit. The message had got home to the disciples that they had to forgive anyone who had wronged them, but they hadn't got the full measure of it. So Peter says how many times do I have to forgive, is up to seven

### **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.

### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Dear Lord, we pray for pupils and teachers as schools have returned this week. There will be much that is different, but we ask that you walk with them at this stressful time.

We also pray for university students as they start their new terms, especially new students for whom university life will not be as envisaged.

And we pray for Ministers, Deacons and lay workers starting a new church year in strange and challenging circumstances. Amen.

### **HYMN H&P 231, StF 334**

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise,  
In all his words most wonderful,  
Most sure in all his ways.

times enough? But Jesus in effect says there is no limit to how many times you have to forgive and goes on to tell the parable.

At the core of the parable is the message that God forgives us so we should forgive others who have wronged us – completely, no ifs or buts, with grace and compassion as God does. And of course we repeat this every time we say the Lord's prayer; 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us', printed below in full this week.

Perhaps, in modern language, wrongs and wrongdoings may be better. But either way, the important thing to remember is that we should always forgive unconditionally just as we are forgiven by God unconditionally.

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came

O wisest love! That flesh and blood  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God's presence and his very self  
And essence all divine.

O generous love! that he who came  
As man to smite the foe,  
The double agony for us  
As man should undergo;

And in the garden secretly,  
And on the Cross on high,  
Should teach his followers, and inspire  
To suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise,  
In all his words most wonderful,  
Most sure in all his ways.

### **BLESSING**

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us always.  
Amen