



Thursday 12th August Holy Communion

Welcome

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen

Prayers of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,

**forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen**

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.

Collect

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 12:1-12

The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, you are living in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, mortal, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile; and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who go into exile. Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry the baggage through it. In their sight you shall lift the baggage on your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face, so that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.

I did just as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands; I brought it out in the dark, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight. In the morning the word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel in it.' Say, 'I am

a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.' And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage on his shoulder in the dark, and shall go out; he shall dig through the wall and carry it through; he shall cover his face, so that he may not see the land with his eyes.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 18.21–19.1

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

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.'

When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Rev'd Petra Shakeshaft

According to Jewish Law, a man can ask forgiveness of his neighbour up to three times.

It's often understood to mean that we should forgive another up to three times

and the Jewish rabbis at the time of Jesus taught

that there was no requirement to forgive more than three times.

Just prior to our gospel passage this morning, Jesus had been speaking to the disciples about the care of children and the kingdom of heaven and then he goes on to talk about reproving other members of the church who have sinned. So this section of the gospel is very much about community; about building a community and about establishing an expectation of behaviour that allows that community and its individual members to flourish. Matthew, is, of course, writing initially into the situation the early church finds itself in; still very much as a Jewish sect, but with a particular take on the interpretation of Jewish Law.

It seems that Peter has something like this on his mind when he asks Jesus, *How many times should I forgive, as many as seven times?*

Peter may well have thought he was being generous – after all, this is the kind of thing Jesus would say isn't it? *No, not just three times, but six times, seven times, that's what compassion and generosity looks like!* I wonder if Peter was trying to earn Brownie points; showing the others that he had been listening – seven times indeed!

And he had, bless him! Peter had eyes and ears, but had neither seen nor heard the deeper truth of Jesus' message. He didn't quite get it.

Seventy times seven, says Jesus. Wow! That's huge – a much bigger limit than they expected. Except it isn't. The number seven is the number that signifies completeness. God created everything in seven days (or six and a rest day). So seven days is about the completion of God's work – although, God's work in creation is unending. So Jesus' message here is that forgiveness must be boundless, unending, and to illustrate his point, he tells this rather difficult parable about the unforgiving servant.

The servant owes the king an unthinkable amount – ten thousand talents. In today's terms, you're talking about a billion – a ridiculously huge amount; that the servant had no hope of ever paying back. The king wants the servant to be sold, along with his wife and children and all his possessions. From this we can infer that he is a gentile king – In Judaism, a wife could not be sold into slavery to settle debts and neither was it the practice in Jesus' time for children to be sold for this reason (although some Biblical texts imply that this might once have been practiced.) The servant pleads with the king, the king is merciful and the debt is forgiven, he's let off. On his way home he comes across a fellow servant who owes him 100 denarii, a paltry amount by comparison that, with patience, could be paid back. Instead of showing the fellow-servant the same mercy, he has him thrown into prison until he can settle the debt.

The king gets to hear of this and has the man sent to be tortured until the debt is paid in its entirety.

So, says Jesus,
*my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you,
if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.*

Ouch! That's not what I wanted to hear!

I think there are two things here:

First, the original debt, the unthinkable ten thousand talents, had been written off.

There was no longer a debt.

So what is the debt that the servant needs to repay?

The debt is surely the forgiveness and mercy that the king had extended to the servant.

Having been shown that boundless grace,

is the servant not duty-bound to extend that grace to a fellow-servant who owed him so much less?

Until he does; until he forgives as he has been forgiven, he will be tortured.

Torture is not permitted under Jewish Law, so this is about something else;

Matthew is asking us to dig deeper here.

And I think he's saying something profound about the nature of unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness *is* torture.

It weighs us down, shackles us, stops *us* moving on.

We need to forgive as much as we need forgiveness.

The other thing is this:

Seventy times seven doesn't mean counting to 149 and stopping.

The number symbolises a boundlessness, a completeness ...

The ten thousand talents also, is such an unthinkably large, ridiculous amount of money, no servant could ever have accrued such a debt, or have a hope of paying it back.

God's forgiveness of us is infinite, and the sum of our sins, incalculable; ongoing, also boundless.

For us, mere human beings, accepting that boundless forgiveness can be difficult enough, we are much harder on ourselves than God is,

but how do we go on forgiving someone who has really hurt us and, perhaps, who goes on hurting us?

Jesus recognises that forgiveness is a journey.

We can't always do it in one go – we need to revisit it time and time again, because sometimes, we think we've nailed it and then, something happens and, bang! all that pain wells up again and you realise you haven't quite forgiven after all.

These are the things we have to give up to God and let his forgiveness work through us, because, on our own, we are limited and so our forgiveness is limited, bound by our own lack of imagination.

Gods' forgiveness is boundless, unlimited and is ours over and over again,

given to us in love and grace and what God asks is that we extend that forgiveness to one another.

That is what identifies a Christian community – that we love one another and forgive. Endlessly.

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.**

Amen.

Prayers

The Peace

The peace of the Lord always be with you

And also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you

and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, we give you thanks and praise through your beloved Son Jesus Christ, your living Word, through whom you have created all things; who was sent by you in your great goodness to be our Saviour. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh; as your Son, born of the blessed Virgin, he lived on earth and went about among us; he opened wide his arms for us on the cross; he put an end to death by dying for us; and revealed the resurrection by rising to new life; so he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord, you are holy indeed, the source of all holiness; grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit, and according to your holy will, these gifts of bread and wine may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying:

Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

And so, Father, calling to mind his death on the cross, his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world; rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming in glory, we celebrate this memorial of our redemption. As we offer you this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, we bring before you this bread and this cup and we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you.

Send the Holy Spirit on your people and gather into one in your kingdom all who share this one bread and one cup, so that we, in the company of all the saints, may praise and glorify you for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

**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.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you and his blood which he shed for you. Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen

Prayer after Communion

Holy Father, who gathered us here around the table of your Son to share this meal with the whole household of God: in that new world where you reveal the fullness of your peace, gather people of every race and language to share in the eternal banquet of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ. Amen

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact
Revd Petra Shakeshaft (07847 307416)
Sally Bard (01223 501165)