



# Fifteenth Sunday after TRINITY 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023

In the name of the + Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

## The Greeting

Grace, mercy, and peace  
from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

## HYMN

1 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus;  
His the sceptre, His the throne.  
Alleluia! His the triumph,  
His the victory alone.  
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion  
thunder like a mighty flood:  
"Jesus out of every nation  
has redeemed us by His blood."

2 Alleluia! Not as orphans  
are we left in sorrow now.  
Alleluia! He is near us;  
faith believes, nor questions  
how.  
Tho' the cloud from sight  
received Him  
when the forty days were o'er,  
shall our hearts forget His  
promise,  
"I am with you evermore"?

3 Alleluia! Bread of heaven,  
here on earth our food, our stay.  
Alleluia! Here the sinful  
flee to You from day to day.  
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,  
earth's Redeemer, hear our plea  
where the songs of all the sinless  
sweep across the crystal sea.

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.

Lord God,  
we have sinned against you;  
we have done evil in your sight.  
We are sorry and repent.  
Have mercy on us according to your love.  
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.  
Renew a right spirit within us  
and restore us to the joy of your salvation,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

May the Father of all mercies  
cleanse us from our sins,  
and restore us in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Invitation to Confession

God, who in generous mercy

## The Collect

sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:  
grant that your people may be fervent  
in the fellowship of the gospel  
that, always abiding in you,  
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;  
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

A reading from the Old Testament  
Genesis 50. 15-21

#### Joseph Reassures His Brothers

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

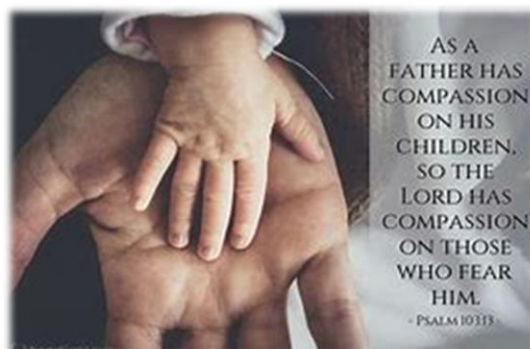
18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. 21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

This is the word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 103

1 Praise the Lord, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.  
2 Praise the Lord, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—  
3 who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,  
4 who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,  
5 who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.  
6 The Lord works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.  
7 He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:  
8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.  
9 He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbour his anger forever;  
10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve



or repay us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;

12 as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

13 As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

## Epistle

### Romans 14 1-12

#### The Weak and the Strong

1 Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters. 2 One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

5 One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. 6 Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written:

“As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,  
'every knee will bow before me;  
every tongue will acknowledge God.’”

12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

This is the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

#### HYMN

Father of heaven, whose love profound  
a ransom for our souls hath found,  
before thy throne we sinners bend;  
to us thy pardoning love extend.

Almighty Son, Incarnate Word,  
our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord,  
before thy throne we sinners bend;  
to us thy saving grace extend.

Eternal Spirit, by whose breath  
the soul is raised from sin and death,  
Before thy throne we sinners bend;  
to us thy quickening power extend

Jehovah - Father, Spirit, Son -  
mysterious Godhead, Three in One,  
before thy throne we sinners bend;  
grace, pardon, life to us extend.

Alleluia, alleluia. Welcome with meekness the implanted word  
That has the power to save your souls  
Alleluia

The Holy Gospel is from the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew beginning at the 21<sup>st</sup> verse.  
Glory to you O Lord

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

21 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?”

22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 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.

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

28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

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

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

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

35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord  
Praise to you O Christ

### **Reflection**

I suppose if your siblings had decided you were such a pain that they plotted your death – but mercifully (?) sold you into slavery to a passing slave merchant - and then lied to your father that you were killed by animals and worse lived with that lie for years – you might find them hard to forgive. Hard to forgive what they had done and hard to forgive the pain they had caused your father.

We can perhaps imagine what they endured with the passing years. The unspoken, yet shared guilt, remorse and shame. Observing their father’s grief must have been unbearable.

The colourful story of Joseph exceeds the supposed colour of his clothes. He had risen from slavery to become the second most powerful man in Egypt, albeit by a pretty convoluted route. Now here is a huge test of forgiveness on Joseph's part. They are in his hand – what will he do? Vengeance is sweet they say, but not as sweet as reconciliation. It is a shining story for both parties had changed.

In this moment Joseph breaks the cycle of deceit and violence by his forgiveness and his brothers stop hiding behind their father's words (if he ever said them?) and weeping, bow before him and ask Joseph's forgiveness on their own account. Joseph weeps with them. His vain, youthful prophetic dream of their bowing before him because he was so great, which caused such animosity, was transfigured for good; turned from evil egotism to good use. They had become a family in reconciliation.

Jesus' almost humorous parable. The amount the first man owed was the total budget for a small country – zillions – and the debt was forgiven, he was released from its burden. But he does not show the same mercy to another and fusses for the few pounds he is owed.

It is hard to forgive some things. Hard to forgive others, hard also to forgive ourselves. It helps sometimes to detach the emotion from it. If we have to pay a huge bill – we may feel negative in all sorts of ways, conversely if we acquired unexpected money, or put our finances straight, then there are equally positive emotions. Yet in both cases there is simply the movement of money.

Forgiveness is a 'thing' just like 'money', and it has its positive and negative emotions (mostly negative). Forgiving ourselves involves the emotion of guilt, shame, remorse. Forgiving others evokes anger, the need for recompense or justice, or worse, wishing ill events to happen to them. All rather yucky and all rather pointless and causing us to use a lot of emotional energy.

There is a reason why things are consigned to the past – it is because they have passed from our lives. We cannot do anything about the past except, to bless it with remorse and let it go. The 'now' and the future are all we have. It is now that we can make the choices – keep on carrying it or really consign it to the past. Writing it all down, or a letter, and burning it; doing something symbolic such as burying a stone which represents the past event. These can help. The symbolic action of bowing before Joseph could not have been easy but the physical action had its effect. It did to both parties, for Joseph, the one so wronged, "wept and spoke kindly".

Forgive us .... as we forgive others.... We will become gentler and more merciful if we began to understand this better.

## **The 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.

## Intercessions

In peace, let us pray to Jesus our Lord,  
who ever lives to make intercession for us.

Saviour of the world,  
be present in all places of suffering, violence and pain,  
and bring hope even in the darkest night.  
Inspire us to continue your work of reconciliation today in our own lives.  
Lord of the Church, Hear our prayer

Empower by your Spirit all Christian people,  
and the work of your Church in every land.  
Give us grace to proclaim the gospel joyfully in word and deed.  
Lord of the Church, Hear our prayer

Shepherd and Guardian of our souls,  
guide and enable all who lead and serve this community  
and those on whom we depend for our daily needs.  
Grant that we may seek the peace and welfare of this place.  
Lord of the Church, Hear our prayer

Great Physician,  
stretch out your hand to bring comfort, wholeness and peace  
to all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit.  
Fill us with compassion, that we may be channels of  
your healing love.  
Lord of the Church, Hear our prayer

Conqueror of death,  
remember for good those whom we love but see no longer.  
Help us to live this day in the sure and certain hope of  
your eternal victory.  
Lord of the Church, Hear our prayer

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.

Amen.

Keep, O Lord, your Church, with your perpetual mercy;  
and, because without you our human frailty cannot but fall,  
keep us ever by your help from all things hurtful,  
and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Being made one by the power of the Spirit,  
as our Saviour taught us, so we 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.  
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

## Blessings and Ending

Great God, you are one God,  
and you bring together what is scattered  
and mend what is broken.  
Unite us with the scattered peoples of the earth  
that we may be one family of your children.  
Bind up all our wounds  
and heal us in spirit,  
that we may be renewed as disciples of Jesus Christ,  
our Master and Saviour.  
And the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen

## HYMN

1 O love, how deep, how broad, how high,  
how passing thought and fantasy,  
that God, the Son of God, should take  
our mortal form for mortals' sake!

2 He sent no angel to our race,  
of higher or of lower place,  
but wore the robe of human frame,  
and He Himself to this world came.

3 For us baptized, for us He bore  
His holy fast, and hungered sore;  
for us temptations sharp He knew,  
for us the tempter overthrew.

4 For us to wicked men betrayed,  
scourged, mocked, in crown of thorns arrayed,  
He bore the shameful cross and death  
for us at length gave up His breath.

5 For us He rose from death again,  
for us He went on high to reign,  
for us He sent His Spirit here  
to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer

6 All glory to our Lord and God  
for love so deep, so high, so broad—  
the Trinity whom we adore  
forever and forevermore.

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