

Fourteenth Sunday after TRINITY

6th September 2026



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 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King!

2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Glorious in his faithfulness!

3 Fatherlike he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Widely yet his mercy flows!

4 Angels, help us to adore him;
you behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Invitation to Confession

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

Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God. 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.

Glory be to God on high,
and on earth peace, good will toward men.
We praise Thee, we bless Thee,
we worship Thee, we glorify Thee,
we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory:
O Lord God, heavenly King;
God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father:
That takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy;
Thou only art the Lord;
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art the most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collect

Almighty God,
whose only Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence:
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
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

First reading from Scripture Ezekiel 33. 7-11

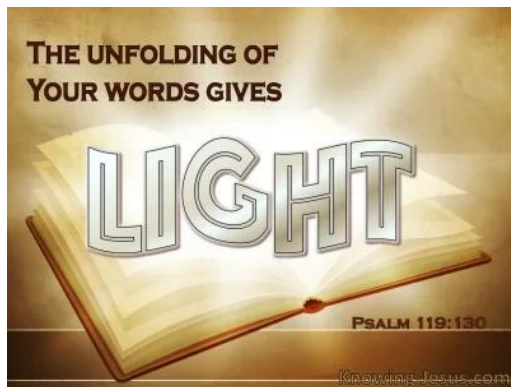
7 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. 8 When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. 9 But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved.

10 "Son of man, say to the Israelites, 'This is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?"' 11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?'

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes
and I shall keep it to the end.



34 Give me understanding and I shall keep your law;
I shall keep it with my whole heart.
35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for therein is my delight.
36 Incline my heart to your testimonies
and not to unjust gain.
37 Turn away my eyes lest they gaze on vanities;
O give me life in your ways.
38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
which stands for all who fear you.
39 Turn away the reproach which I dread,

because your judgements are good.
40 Behold, I long for your commandments;
in your righteousness give me life.

Second reading from Scripture Romans 13 8-end

8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

Take this moment, sign and space;
take my friends around;
here among us make the place
where Your love is found.

Take the tiredness of my days,
take my past regret,
letting Your forgiveness touch
all I can't forget.

Take the time to call my name,
take the time to mend
who I am and what I've been,
and I've failed to tend.

Take the little child in me,
scared of growing old;
help me here to find my worth
made in Christ's own mould.

Take my talents, take my skills,
take what's yet to be;
let my life be Yours, and yet,
let it still be me

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 15th verse.
Glory to you O Lord

15 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

18 "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

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

Reflection

The Jewish rabbis had prescribed ideas about forgiveness. A man must forgive his brother three times but no more than three times. It comes from an idea in the book of Amos for three transgressions and four (see chapters 1 and 2). From this they deduced that God will forgive three times and on the fourth visit punishment. The Rabbis could not think that someone could be more gracious than God; forgiveness must, therefore, be limited. Perhaps that is where the idiom 'Three strikes and you're out' finds its source rather than baseball, or perhaps baseball thought it a good principle!

Jesus lays great importance on forgiveness; it is the only petition in the Lord's prayer which he qualifies. "Forgive and you will be forgiven; 'forgive from your heart'; for if you forgive ... your heavenly Father will forgive you."

Our being forgiven is in equal amount to the forgiveness we give to others and is dependent upon that. I am sure that if we fully realised that is what we are saying when we say the Lord's prayer perhaps, we might think twice before saying it.

What is the most dominant characteristic of God? Is it almighty power? Knowledge of all things? No – it is that God is holy, a word so hard to define. God is absolute light with no shadow of darkness. We struggle to understand what that might mean.

Before such a God we all stand in absolute need of forgiveness. Like having a smudge on our face which we do not see until we look in a mirror, we cannot see or appreciate our continual need for forgiveness and restoration.

That is not to bring us down, for forgiveness and restoration are available. When we understand our need of forgiveness it should help us be merciful to others as we would want them to be to us, for we all stand in a continual need of forgiveness.

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

Of more importance in what unforgiveness does to us. The enigmatic words about binding and loosing suggest to me the very 'earthed' effect of forgiveness. I have met many people deeply affected for years...years, ongoing and probably for the rest of their lives, by unforgiveness. It is toxic and very damaging and utterly futile. It robs us of life, it cast a pall over everything and blights our lives, our relationships, quality of life and our health. But you do not need me to spell this out, we have all met its effects.

The first verses in the gospel reading (15-17) are suggestive of an editorial 'gloss', made obvious by the idea of taking the matter 'to the church' when at that time there was none. The reference to 'pagan and tax collectors', again does not fit with Jesus' example and teaching. Recall that Jesus was criticised because he mixed with such people. Rather it suggests a need to spell out and regulate forgiveness in the early church.

Jesus commands us to forgive and puts no limit on this; it is a 'health warning' from Jesus. Elsewhere when Peter suggests a limit no doubt, he considered himself very generous in suggesting seven times and expected to be commended. Jesus' reply "not up to seven times but up to seventy times seven" is not meant to get us into mathematical juggling. Rather the idea is that there is no end to the number of times we must forgive.

For some things this can be very hard to do especially if the damage runs deep in us. But the wisdom of Jesus points to an idea that we are 'bound' by unforgiveness and that forgiveness 'looses' us allows us to be free.

Easier said than done you may think; true. But Paul's letter suggests a way to break out of the tangle hold of unforgiveness. We are to act with love towards others. It sounds simplistic but evidence suggests it works. Reverse the whole thing. Purposefully direct the energy you expend in unforgiveness towards acts of kindness and love; volunteer, visit, get involved in a social focussed project. You will find with every act, the unforgiveness 'shrinks' until you find it has become very small. This happens because your focus has changed – away from yourself.

We are called to 'work out our salvation' and I think this is a good example of 'working it out'. A determination that you will reclaim your life, remove the toxic effects by the cleansing of doing good. Redeem the time stolen from you by 'life events', snatch it back and make the most of the time you have left. Taken to heart – this is a liberating message.

The creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Intercessions

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

Jesus calls us to obedience.

Lord challenge us. Keep us from just being converts - taking comfort in ideas about you - but help us hear and understand your call to be your disciples, to learn from you, to be changed by you and to make a difference with our lives.

Jesus calls us to hope.

Lord for your church here and throughout the world we pray. Enable us by your spirit to proclaim boldly that you are the source of truth, of real life, and the way to know God as Father. Help us do this by the way we live as well as what we say. We hold in our prayers our sisters and brothers suffering greatly for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus calls to responsibility

Lord, we hold in our prayer those who have authority and power. Our King and Government and leaders of nations. By your Spirit, strengthen what is good and restrain what is evil. Make us good stewards of the gift of creation and give us wisdom to repair and restore, for we are accountable for our common life.

Jesus calls us to love.

Lord, you have blessed us with so much for which we give thanks. Now help us open our hands and our hearts as we are often the answers to our prayers. Break our hardness open to generosity, not just the easy way with money but with the gift of time, of ourselves. Comfort the bereaved. Receive in your mercy those who have died recently and those who come to our minds now whom we remember, those who were dear to us. We are thankful for their lives, how they enriched ours, and we place them in your love.

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

Merciful God,
your Son came to save us
and bore our sins on the cross:
may we trust in your mercy
and know your love,
rejoicing in the righteousness
that is ours 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 Judge Eternal, throned in splendour,
Lord of lords and King of kings,
with your living fire of judgment
purge this land of bitter things;
solace all its wide dominion
with the healing of your wings.

2 Still the weary folk are pining
for the hour that brings release,
and the city's crowded clangour
cries aloud for sin to cease,
and the homesteads and the woodlands
plead in silence for their peace.

3 Crown, O God, your own endeavour;
cleave our darkness with your sword;
feed the faithless and the hungry
with the richness of your word;
cleanse the body of this nation
through the glory of the Lord.