



The Methodist Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 13th Sept 2020

This short act of worship, based on the service which would have been held at Church today, has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman , to use at home. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Let's begin by singing together new words set to a familiar tune for 'Love divine. All loves excelling'

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as through word and song and prayer
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of Life and Lord of All,
sharer of our flesh and frailness
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other:
found in him are no divides.
Race and class and sex and language-
such are barriers he derides.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

John Bell and Graham Maule @WGRG 1989

Opening prayer: Psalm 51

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when

you pass judgment.⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

⁶ You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing^[c] spirit.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, O God O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

This morning's reading: Matthew 18:21-35

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, canceled 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. ^[U] 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."

Let's sing again...A King Once Told His Servants
Sung to the tune for 'The churches one foundation'

A king once told his servants,
"Now pay me what is mine!"
One came to him and begged him,
"I'll pay! Just give me time!"
And so the king forgave him,
though that man's debt was great.
What joy to be unburdened!
What cause to celebrate!

Though he had been forgiven,
that man was not so kind.
He threatened one who owed him,
"Now pay me what is mine!"
He would not show compassion
toward one whose debt was small.
What judgment came upon him!
How bitter was his fall!

O God, in Christ you freed us;
now may we not forget.
Our sin was overwhelming
but you once paid the debt.
May we live lives of mercy,
forgiving, blessing, too;
And may our grace toward others
reflect our thanks to you.
© 2012 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

Today's message

A little bit later on in our worship we will all join together to say The Lord's Prayer, one which contains the lines...

'Forgive us our XXXX
as we forgive those who XXXX against us'

Now I have deliberately missed out a word and before we go any further I'd like you to say the line out loud to yourself and think about what word you would automatically say in that space, when you say the Lord's Prayer...off you go.

Okay then what did you say...did you use the word 'debt', did you use the word 'trespass' or did you use the word 'sin' because all three are commonly used in this most familiar of prayers. But I wonder whether they might all have the same meaning.

If you are in 'debt' to someone, one understanding is perhaps that it implies that you owe something, that you have not done something, given something, or said something that perhaps you should have done.

If you used the word 'trespass', and the most common example would be if you trespass onto a piece of land or property, then it implies that you have done something that you should not have done.

Perhaps using the word debt implies a negative i.e. something that you haven't done or someone hasn't done for you that needs forgiveness for, whereas trespass has implication of something that you have done, or has been done to you that also requires forgiveness.

I wonder then if using the word 'sins' might tick many more boxes, encompassing as it does our negative omissions and our positive intrusions; those we have knowingly committed and those we have unknowingly done

Just an interesting pause to make us think about perhaps the word we chose to use can alter what many think is a 'set in stone' prayer.

And of course whatever word we use we are asking to be forgiven just as we forgive others. Just as we have all been recipients of God's mercy, grace and forgiveness, we too are then obliged to extend the same mercy, grace and forgiveness to others. That is the basis of the parable Jesus tells about the ungrateful servant. He is more than happy to be forgiven but thinks that's the end of the matter and see no need to extend the same to another

What we have received we are required to pass on a little bit like a game of pass the parcel. Imagine how badly that particular game would progress (or not) if once you had received the parcel / gift from one person you steadfastly refused to pass it on but simply kept hold of it for yourself. And you are required not just to pass it on once, not just pass it on to the people you know or to those that you like, but to pass it on again and again and again.

Not seven times, or even the unbelievably gracious seven x seven times that Peter thought must have thought went beyond all expectations, but as Jesus was quick to remind him, forgiveness should not have a number put against it but must be offered to others repeatedly. Without limits

Of course sometimes forgiving a person is not an easy thing to do. Forgiveness can be an incredibly difficult thing to do. And forgiveness doesn't mean we have to forget. After all if the issue was so significant that it required an act of forgiveness perhaps we ought to remember it. Not holding it in our memory to drag up over and over again in a point scoring exercise but recalling that difficult experience so that we can learn from it.

Forgiveness is sometimes only the start of a process. The Truth and Reconciliation committees that have accomplished such profound work in places like South Africa, Rwanda, Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia, see forgiveness as part of a process that also includes an honest and truthful acknowledgement and admission of wrongdoing, repentance of such acts and then the desire to build bridges through a process of reconciliation. An often painful process entered into by those forgiving and those receiving forgiveness in order to bring about healing.

Sometimes forgiveness becomes harder if the person we are forgiving refuses to accept it,

perhaps feeling that he / she / they did nothing wrong in the first place. Perhaps the person we are forgiving never gets to find out about it, maybe we have lost contact or perhaps they have died.

Sometimes we can speak the words but the feelings of being aggrieved, of feeling resentful, of still being hurt and angry can remain. Especially if the person or people we have forgiven shows no sign of remorse, of changing their ways, of repenting over their action.

Such resentment and anger can build. Feeling of hurt can fester up leading to changes in our physical, mental and spiritual health in the one that has been hurt, whilst the one who has caused the hurt continues to act as if there isn't a problem.

It is in situations like these that I am reminded of a phrase I first came across during my ministerial training which said....when you forgive someone you set a person free, and that person is often you'. I'll repeat that... when you forgive someone you set a person free, and that person is often you'

Prayers of Intercessions

We pray for...

The stories that have dominated our news headlines over the past week.

We pray for our local community

For our church family

For those dear to us

And finally we join our voices to say The Lord's Prayer together...Our Father

**Let's conclude this worship by singing STF 425
(tune Lord of all hopefulness)**

God of forgiveness, your people you freed
and saw them return to idolatrous greed,
with anger against them, you righteously burned.
And then to compassion and forgiveness you
turned

God of forgiveness, the Saviour you sent,
proclaiming good news with the call to repent,

with merciful love and forgiveness he came, the
lost and the headstrong to embrace and reclaim

God of forgiveness, your power we implore,
with mercy and wholeness, our lives to restore,
perverse and misguided, our souls we deprave,
o come full of healing, with compassion to save

A blessing...

**Let us go into this week, attempting to forgive
others, just as you have forgiven us. Amen**