

Written Service Sunday September 17th
A service of worship for use at home
Prepared by Jan Davies

Call to Worship: Praise the Lord my soul!
All my being, praise His holy name!
Praise the Lord, my soul and do not forget how kind He is.
He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.

Hymn: 17 in Singing the Faith:

With gladness we worship, rejoice as we sing,
Free hearts and free voices how blessed to
bring;
The old, thankful story shall scale thy abode,
Thou King of all glory, most bountiful God.

Renewed by thy Spirit, redeemed by thy son,
Thy children revere thee for all thou hast done.
O Father! Returning to love and to light,
Thy children are yearning to praise thee aright.

Thy right would we give thee – true homage
thy due,
And honour eternal, the universe through,
With all thy creation, earth heaven and sea,
In one acclamation we celebrate thee.

We join with the angels, and so there is given
From earth alleluia, in answer to heaven.
Amen! Be thou glorious below and above,
Redeeming, victorious and infinite love.

Prayers of Adoration and Praise:

Merciful God, you are our Father and we are your beloved children.
You have taught us that we are loved and forgiven,
Cherished and longed for,
Held in your hand.

We praise and adore you.

Creator God, you bless us with life and love,
You have taught us that all we have is a gift from you;
Food for our wellbeing, shelter and clothes,
Love and laughter,
Nourishment for our souls and a sense of your abiding presence,

We praise and adore you.

Jesus Christ, Saviour and Lord,
You have taught us that we are not servants, but friends,
Friends for whom you died.
You offer us new life,
A home in your Kingdom for we are Kingdom people.

We praise and adore you.

Holy Spirit, ever present God
You warm our hearts and fill us with your love.
You guide us and teach us
Opening our hearts to new possibilities
Stretching out our horizons, leading us into new experiences
And accompanying us on our journey,

We praise and adore you.

One God, Father Son and Holy Spirit,
You are all we need.
As we worship you, may we sense your presence;
Accept our worship and praise
And fill us with gratitude and joy.
Amen

Readings: Matthew 18: 21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked “Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”

“No, not seven times,” answered Jesus, “but seventy times seven, because the Kingdom of Heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants’ accounts. He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought to him who owed him millions of pounds. The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered to be sold as a slave with his wife and his children and all he had in order to pay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before the king. “Be patient with me” he begged, “and I will pay you everything!” The king felt sorry for him so he forgave him the debt and let him go.

Then the man went out and met a fellow servant who owed him a few pounds. He grabbed him and started choking him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he said. His fellow servant fell down and begged him “be patient with me, and I will pay you back!” But he refused; instead he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt.

When the other servants saw what had happened, they were upset and went to the king and told him all that had happened. So, he called the servant in. “You worthless slave!” he said. “I forgave you the whole amount you owed me because you asked me to. You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.” The king was very angry and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount.

And Jesus concluded, “That is how my Father in heaven will treat everyone of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

James 2: 8-13

You will be doing the right thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.” But, if you treat people according to outward appearance, you are guilty of sin, and the Law condemns you as a law breaker. Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all. For the same one who said “Do not commit adultery” also said “Do not commit murder.” Even if you do not commit adultery, you have become a lawbreaker if you commit murder. Speak and act as people who will be judged by the law that sets us free. For God will not show mercy when He judges the person who has not been merciful; but mercy triumphs over judgement.

Story of the Mizen Family:

At 11.30 on 10th May 2008, Jimmy Mizen was murdered by Jake Fahri in his local baker’s shop. Jimmy was the eighth child of Margaret and Barry Mizen. Jimmy was 6ft 2in tall and is described as a well mannered ‘Gentle Giant’ who had celebrated his 16th birthday just the day before and was so excited about his upcoming visit to USA. On that morning his mother had asked him to go to the local bakery just a few yards from his home.

Jake, on the other hand, had been in constant trouble with the police and was known to bully smaller boys. On that morning Jake tried to pick a fight with Jimmy who refused to be involved. Jake went

outside and picked up a metal sign to attack Jimmy with. Jimmy grabbed the sign and was removing it from Jake's grasp when Jake reached out and grabbed a glass bowl and smashed it into Jimmy's jaw.

Jimmy fell with blood pouring from a wound. Jake then left with a smirk on his face. Jimmy crawled into a back room and rang for assistance from his older brother Tommy. When he arrived he realised that this was no ordinary cut. In fact both Jimmy's carotid artery and jugular vein had been cut and Jimmy died in his brother's arms before any medical help could arrive.

The following day the police charged Jake with murder. He was convicted of although Jake suggested that he had acted in self defence. Throughout the trial Jake verbally abused the family – even during the impact statements.

The family were devout Roman Catholics and, surprisingly, the following morning they were met by the press who were eager to get their feelings about Jake and his family. But Jimmy's mother said "I hope that the parents of Jimmy's killer would be left alone because it wasn't their fault. I don't feel any anger because anger breeds anger; and that was what killed my son".

Barry added "Do we need more legislation or do we need to ask ourselves about the society we want to live in? Change has to come from each of us."

The whole family were involved in the formation of the 'Jimmy Mizen Foundation' which works with various local charities and community projects to promote work among young people – especially the deprived youngsters who lived in South London. They began by opening a cafe called 'The Cafe of Good Hope' in 2010 and ran by Jimmy's older brother Billy. All profits go to various projects. Two more cafes have opened; 'Sammy Ts' and 'Ten Thousand Hands.'

Barry and Margaret have been awarded the MBE in recognition of their work. The website for the Jimmy Mizen Foundation continues gets thousands of hits and they get hundreds of e-mails from all over the world. The death of Jimmy has resulted in the most amazing fruitfulness. (Taken from 'Season of the Soul' by Jan Davies and Tim Coleman)

Hymn: 628 in Songs of Fellowship

Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the anchor,
My hope is in you alone. (Sing through twice)

Sermon:

Peter was expecting praise from Jesus in our reading today! The rabbi's taught that they should forgive people three times but on the fourth occasion they should no longer be expected to forgive – after all, they taught that there was a similar limit to what they could expect from God. Peter thought he was being very generous when He suggested that he should forgive seven times! Jesus however taught that God was limitless in His forgiveness as we should be. Over and over again Jesus urges us to "be merciful to receive mercy", and in the Lord's Prayer we ask for God's forgiveness "as we forgive those who sin against us." And, just in case we miss the point, He goes on to explain that, if we cannot forgive, then we cannot expect to be forgiven ourselves. But I admit that, when someone has hurt me, I find it very difficult to forgive them.

Very few of us have ever been faced with the sort of tragedy that the Mizen family have faced but we can be quarrelsome, judgemental, critical and unforgiving. And, we can gossip hurtfully

behind someone's back or complain bitterly about the way someone else is and in this way we can spread discord around – and I have certainly been involved in this. This doesn't mean we can't be involved in disagreements and certainly our Church Councils would be deadly dull if we all agreed about everything! However, what is so wrong is holding on to bitterness which acts like a cancer in our church or our family.

The fact is that the only person we hurt when we hold on to bitterness is ourselves. It damages our relationships with each other – and more importantly with God.

It sounds so easy doesn't it? Just forgive! If only it was that simple. It took me years to forgive my own father who deserted us when I was only four. It took a great deal of working at, asking God for help, saying the words when we can hardly mean them. It may mean trying to understand where someone else is coming from – even if they don't do the same for you.

Forgiveness for me is a process rather than a one off act. Sometimes I think I have forgiven someone but in a moment of stress or weakness it all comes back and I get angry again and I have to begin at the beginning - again, and again and again.

Meditation including Prayers of Confession:

'Forgive', that's what you said Lord,

Yet I find it difficult to even forgive those hurtful words, delivered to me years ago.

My ego has a long memory!

I think I have been gracious and forgiven then,

The simplest word will bring it all to the surface;

And again I am filled with bitterness, it makes me spiteful, critical, and I mutter darkly to myself.

Why can't I just let go?

It is like an irritating scab; I can't help picking at it until it hurts and bleeds again.

Then Lord I read about the Mizen family,

And I realise that I have so little to forgive and forget.

*And, if I am honest, I admit that sometimes **my** words are equally wounding.*

But I forget so easily,

And assume that the other person will understand that I didn't mean to be unkind.

Then again, I hear your word,

If I don't forgive, completely, absolutely – no going back,

Then I cannot be forgiven.

And I do need your forgiveness Lord, so help me to simply let go,

And know the peace of your forgiveness.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, you said, "My peace I leave you".

In a world of violence, pain and mistrust:

Make us channels of your peace.

We bring to you Lord, the troubles of the world:

(We pray for places of conflict- especially Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Russia, The Holy Lands and China. We continue to pray for all those who suffer because of climate change – those living with drought, flooding or extreme weather events.)

Lord Jesus

Where there is hatred, bring your love.

We bring to you Lord, broken relationships and mistrust in the world:

(We pray for governments, religious and political leaders, and all those who make decisions on behalf of others)

Lord Jesus

Where there is injury, bring your pardon.

We bring to you Lord the Church, both here and throughout the world:

(We pray for this church. Give us a vision for the future. We ask for the coming of God's Kingdom in this dark world; for those who seek and those who guide, for those who are persecuted and those who live in fear)

Lord Jesus

Where there is doubt, bring true faith.

We bring to you Lord, all human sorrow:

(In silence we pray for those we know who are sick and bereaved, lonely and anxious)

Lord Jesus

Where there is sadness, bring your joy.

We bring to you Lord, ourselves, our trials and temptations:

(In silence, we pray for ourselves)

Lord Jesus

May we be channels of your peace and love. In the name of Jesus:

AMEN

Hymn: 636 in Songs of Fellowship

O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee:
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depth its flow may richer,
fuller be.

O light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee:
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day may
brighter, fairer be.

O joy that seakest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee:
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain that
morn shall tearless be.

O cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee:
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be.

Final Prayer

Jesus, who touched the loneliness of the marginalised in society,

Come and touch our hearts today.

Jesus, who brought life and laughter to those who had lost hope,

Come and bring hope to the hopeless today.

Jesus, who met your friends in the garden and at table,

Come and meet us in the ordinary activities of life.

Jesus, who on the Emmaus Road walked unnoticed beside those who were confused and sad,

Come and walk with us when life confuses.

Jesus of the tomb, who destroyed death with life and darkness with light,

Come and destroy the darkness in our lives and light a flame within us.

Jesus, who revealed yourself to those who loved you,

Come into our lives this day and reveal your glory to us,

AMEN