

Swaythling Parish

Sunday 13 September 2020

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Welcome

Below is a service sheet for you to use for this week's Sunday morning service. This is based on a service that is being broadcast as a video on Sunday morning through the YouTube channel. It will be available on YouTube from 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it (viewable from any smartphone, tablet or computer, and also from most "smart" TVs). If do not have access to watch the YouTube video, we hope you will be able to use these words and join us too in spirit.

Introduction from Rev Peter Dockree

Welcome to our service today, whether joining online, reading from the sheet, or worshipping in person.

One of the trickiest topics that Christians have to tackle, is the topic of forgiveness, and judging others. It is tricky because as we try and live out the challenge to forgive, it exposes us to all manner of complex emotions and past pain. It is a topic that some find tough to even here, perhaps because all too often you have heard neat simplistic messages about the need to forgive and yet for a whole range of reasons that may feel something beyond your reach.

We are going to explore forgiveness today, but please feel do not feel judged. We explore this

topic because it is too big to ignore, but we do not come with easy answers.

Greeting

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

And also with you.

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Prayer of Thanks

We begin by acknowledging the moments of grace and blessing in our lives and in the lives of others. Grace that loves us as we are, blessing that gives us good things (even at times when things are tough). Let us take a moment to recognise those things now and give thanks.

We will now sing a hymn about Grace, that amazing grace.

Hymn: Amazing Grace

1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

3 Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

5 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease:
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.

6 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
but God, who called me here below,
will be forever mine.

John Newton (1779)

Confession

Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. Sometimes we can hold ourselves to a higher standard than anyone else and we can assume that God does too. So we will now acknowledge where we are sorry, but then own God's grace and forgiveness for ourselves.

For the moments when we fail to love as
we are called to love, failed to treat others
with respect and dignity and manage to
perpetuate division.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

For the times when we listen to the voices of negativity and ignore the voices of grace.

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

For the times when we are beaten by inertia, and cynicism and fail to do what we can and should.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

May the God of love
Bring us back to himself,
Forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

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.

Readings:

Our first reading is a call to respect others and not to be judge.

Romans 14: 1-12

Read by the Rachel in the video

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters. One

person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 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. 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.

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. 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. For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 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. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

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. It is written:

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

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

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Our next reading is all about the challenge to forgive.

Matthew 18: 21-35

Read by the John Saunders in the video

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?”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 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.

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

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

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

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

“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.

A Reflection from Rev Peter Dockree

When little children say sorry, they sometimes do so, halfway to doing whatever they were apologising for again. They also have a capacity to express extreme emotions like, “I hate you”, and then a few minutes later react as if it never even happened. As we get older though the words sorry and “I forgive you”, become more and more complex to say, and even more complex to just get on with life as if the thing didn’t happen in the first place. We seem to assume that old mantra “forgive and forget”

is what we must always do, and yet the more that life has thrown at us the more difficult that becomes. We feel that to say the words “I forgive you” is to vindicate an action that we still feel the effects from deeply, and we don’t always want or feel able to do that.

Forgiveness is so often presented as a one-off action, about someone else, and as an action that only counts if it leads to forgetting. I suggest that none of those things are true. In our first reading we find a reminder that we are not the judge, God is, and so the act of forgiveness is not vindicating another, but passing over the judgement to God. Our second reading is a reminder that forgiveness comes in response to the forgiveness we have received, the fact that God loves us in all our imperfections and not because the other has earned it. It is also interesting that Jesus chooses an analogy where the master forgave the servant everything but the second servant only asks of the first servant to be given more time. The request is not for total forgiveness but for grace and time to make amends. This hints at a process and not something that just happens.

In the time I have spent working with people, and in my own life, I have come believe that forgiveness is a long, painful and difficult process. Sometimes it involves small steps over many years, sometimes it feels just too big. Forgiveness is not important because the other person may deserve it, or because we are letting them off the hook, but to bring greater release and peace to the person

forgiving. Forgiveness is also not some simple click of the fingers that also expunges our memory of the wrong that we are forgiving. We cannot always forget, and we don’t always want to, but we can allow that which holds us to hold us a little less tightly, we can gradually seek release.

Let us take a moment now to reflect on this, what do we resonate with, what do we find most challenging here and are there things that we disagree with. There is space for all three, so let’s give them to God now.

Prayers

In the video, Sarah Dockree leads us in prayers for our world and our community. The following prayer is based on a prayer from the Corrymeela Community on the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation:

Today we pray for those who carry the pain of the past, and of unforgiveness
For those in families, in friendships, and in communities, who are affected by broken relationships.

May we listen to and learn from each other,
May we all admit our responsibility to shape a better present and a better future.

God in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus of Nazareth turned towards those who knew their need.

Today we think of those who know their need.
We think of those who are leaving homes behind because of war,

those who are plunging into the sea because it is safer than the land,
Those who are experiencing lack of food or other basic resources due to poverty, or Covid
Those who have been marginalized and have suffered due to the colour of their skin,
and we think of all those who are crying out for justice and shelter.

May we turn towards their need.

God in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the gift of our community
May we listen well to all those around us,
And may we all be generous with resources and welcome.

God in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of our saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

Prayer of thanks for Gifts

Let us have a moment to acknowledge the gifts and care of others in this time, financial, emotional, advice, support and so many other things to us as individuals, as community and as church. If you would like to give to the life and work of this church then you can send a cheque made payable to Swaythling Parish, or give online :

www.give.net/SwaythlingParish

Let us take a moment now to give thanks to God: We thank you Lord for all the gifts we have received, financial and in so many other ways. Help us to use them wisely to share your love in this place. **Amen**

We end the service with a simple hymn of praise. We have spent time reflecting on a tricky topic this morning so we end with a hymn of praise where we remember that we can be healed, restored and forgiven.

Hymn: Praise my soul the king of heaven

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!

HF Lyte (1834)

A closing Prayer,

God of our pilgrimage,
you have fed us with the bread of heaven.
Refresh and sustain us
as we go forward on our journey,
to live and work to your praise and glory. **Amen**

Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for joining us today.
May we go about our lives knowing as Jesus did
that we are loved and held.

May we go from this moment as radicals, as travellers, as change makers, as those who maintain the spaces of love, as people of prayer, sometimes as people called to be, sometimes as people called to do but always as people called to love.

And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always.
Amen.

*Thank you for joining in with us. If we can support you in any way, please get in touch. 023 8055 4231
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