



Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 13, 2020

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

In today's second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

A bowl of water may be placed on a table as you read the Thanksgiving. You may make the sign of the cross, a sign marked at baptism, on your forehead, on your lips and on your heart.

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

Amen.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Water is poured into the font.

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight.

Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family.

Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.

At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.

To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

HYMN

“In Thee Is Gladness”

Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.

In thee is gladness amid all sadness, Jesus, sunshine of my heart.

By thee are given the gifts of heaven, thou the true redeemer art.

Our souls thou wakest; our bonds thou breakest.

Who trusts thee surely has built securely and stands forever: Alleluia!

**Our hearts are pining to see thy shining, dying or living, to thee are cleaving;
naught can us sever: Alleluia!**

Jesus is ours! We fear no powers, not of earth or sin or death.

He sees and blesses in worst distresses; he can change them with a breath.

**Wherefore the story tell of his glory with heart and voices; all heav'n rejoices
in him forever: Alleluia!**

**We shout for gladness, triumph o'er sadness,
love him and praise him and still shall raise him glad hymns forever: Alleluia!**

Text: Johann Lindemann, 1549-1631; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.
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GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Let us pray ... O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Romans 14:1-12

This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.”

So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Word of God. Word of life.

Thanks be to God.

(silence)

PSALM 103:1-13

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all God's benefits —

who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases;

who redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy;

who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

O LORD, you provide vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.

You made known your ways to Moses and your works to the children of Israel.

LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy,

slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love;

you will not always accuse us, nor will you keep your anger forever.

You have not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,

so great is your steadfast love for those who fear you.

As far as the east is from the west, so far have you removed our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion for his children,

So you have compassion for those who fear you, O LORD.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

“I Come with Joy”

Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.

I come with joy, a child of God, forgiven, loved, and free,

The life of Jesus to recall in love laid down for me, in love laid down for me.

Together met, together bound by all that God has done,

**We'll go with joy, to give the world the love that makes us one,
the love that makes us one.**

GOSPEL: Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

The Gospel of Matthew, the eighteenth chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

HOMILY

HYMN

"Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive"

Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.

**"Forgive our sins as we forgive," you taught us, Lord, to pray;
but you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.**

**How can your pardon reach and bless the unforgiving heart
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bitterness depart?**

**In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly knew:
how trifling others' debts to us; how great our debt to you!**

**Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls and bid resentment cease;
then, by your mercy reconciled, our lives will spread your peace.**

Text: Rosamond E. Herklots, 1905-1987, alt.
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PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

You welcome us when we are weak in faith. Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Strengthen faith through Bible studies and Sunday schools. Nurture new ministries of education and growth. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

The heights of the heavens show us the vastness of your steadfast love. Have compassion on your creation. Where human selfishness has brought ruin and destruction, we look to you to heal, renew, and redeem your world. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Bring healing and justice wherever harm is dealt. Provide vindication for all who are oppressed. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor; deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger, and guard refugees fleeing famine, poverty, and war. Heal the sick and tend to those who are alone, homeless or homebound, especially Karen, Erika, Bert, Maureen, Bill & Joan. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Teach us to forgive. Remind us that you do not always accuse us. Still our tongues when we are tempted to pass judgment and argue over opinions. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise you. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered as one in Christ, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Amen.

HYMN

"Rise, Shine, You People!"

Please either sing the hymn or pray the verse speaking out loud.

**Rise, shine, you people! Christ the Lord has entered
our human story; God in him is centered.**

**He comes to us, by death and sin surrounded,
with grace unbounded.**

**See how he sends the pow'rs of evil reeling;
he brings us freedom, light and life and healing.**

**All men and women, who by guilt are driven,
now are forgiven.**

**Come, celebrate; your banners high unfurling,
your songs and prayers against the darkness hurling.**

**To all the world go out and tell the story
of Jesus' glory.**

**Tell how the Father sent the Son to save us.
Tell of the Son, who life and freedom gave us.**

**Tell how the Spirit calls from ev'ry nation
God's new creation.**

Text: Ronald A. Klug, b. 1939, alt.

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DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.