

Morning Worship for Proper 19

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:

the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,**

that we may truly worship you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,

all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

Our love for you is like a morning cloud,

like the dew that goes away early.

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling 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 judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement 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 honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour 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 judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement 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. (Romans 14:1–12)

This is the word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God**

Matthew 18:21–35

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew:

Glorify 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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, O Christ**

A reflection by Rev'd Joy Cousans

'Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive' wrote C. S. Lewis. Yet forgiveness is an idea that Jesus returns to again and again in his teaching. In today's passage from Matthew's gospel, Peter comes with a question for Jesus. 'How many times must I go on forgiving?' Jesus replies that forgiveness is not something to be measured or reckoned on a calculator. We should be willing to go on forgiving many times over. Sunday by Sunday we say the Lord's Prayer together. 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' Forgiveness is at heart of our faith. It's easy to say but far from easy to do. As my commentator writes: 'To be told that one ought to forgive and let go of the pain does not effect a change; in fact it may aggravate the situation by heaping a load of guilt onto an already enraged and shamed person.'

Jesus follows his remark to Peter about forgiving 'seventy times seven' by a parable to illustrate his point. The king in the parable forgives his servant an impossible amount. One talent was worth more than 15 years wages for a labourer at that time. So 10,000 talents, which was the amount the servant owed, represents the wages of a day labourer for more than 150,000 years. There is no way the servant could ever hope to repay a debt like that! The parable is another example of Jesus using hyperbole, exaggeration for effect, in his teaching. The servant is forgiven his huge debt. But as he goes out he sees a fellow servant who owes him 100 denarii. One denarius was the usual day's wage for a labourer. As the man is unable to pay, he pleads for mercy. But the servant who has just been forgiven such a colossal debt refuses to be merciful to his fellow servant and has him thrown into jail until he can pay. His actions rebound on him as

the Master withdraws his compassionate stance and throws the man into jail until he can pay off his own debt.

The parable illustrates how human forgiveness is rooted in divine forgiveness. The king forgives the servant such a huge amount that it would be impossible for him ever to repay it. It's interesting to note that when the servant is forgiven his huge debt he doesn't celebrate, shout about it or throw a party. All of these are responses in other parables when something good happens. This servant however doesn't even say thank you! It seems that he has not grasped the meaning of forgiveness. He thinks of it in terms of an exchange and tells the king, 'I will pay you what I owe' even though this is plainly impossible. Forgiveness is not about justice or getting even. At the heart of forgiveness is the concept of mercy.

True forgiveness is a matter of the heart. It is when we experience forgiveness ourselves that we can begin to learn how to forgive others. Martin Lloyd Jones says: 'The man who is truly forgiven and knows it is a man who forgives.' The servant in the parable is truly forgiven, but he doesn't know it in his heart. And when someone else asks him to forgive them he is not able to do it. Jesus' teaching about forgiveness is based on God's lavish generosity in loving, accepting and forgiving us. And he encourages his disciples to go and do likewise.

Perhaps some things feel just too difficult or too terrible to forgive. It is also worth remembering that forgiveness is a process which may take many years. And the fact that Jesus taught his disciples to pray daily to be forgiven and to learn to forgive in their turn suggests that we need the help and power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to work through that process. Dr Sheila Cassidy was imprisoned and tortured by the operatives of General Pinochet in Chile. She struggled with the conflict between her faith and those terrible experiences and has written extensively about suffering. Reflecting on forgiveness, she writes this: 'I can only say: however much we have been wronged, however justified our hatred, if we cherish it, it will poison us. Hatred is a devil to be cast out, and we must pray for the power to forgive, for it is in forgiving our enemies that we are healed.'

These are powerful words, made more resonant by the experiences of the woman who wrote 'pray for the power to forgive'. It is through the grace of God and the working of the Holy Spirit that we can come to a point of forgiveness. Studies have shown that holding onto hurt and pain can cause damage to the person who is unable to let go.

The parable of the unforgiving servant is a great challenge. Forgiveness lies at the heart of Jesus' teaching and is borne out by his life and death. But how hard it is to do! It is through God's grace and the movement of his Holy Spirit in our lives that we may find the grace to forgive others. Forgiveness may take many years, but those who have travelled that path find that it is the path to healing and freedom.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**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.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Chris Banks

Lord, as we approach with trepidation the sixth month of this coronavirus crisis and all the worries and restrictions that it brings to our daily lives, we thank you once again for the support offered to us by Joy, Stephen, Gordon and by all other members of the St Mary's family.

Strengthen your church in the service of Christ, praying this morning for our Bishops, Alan Richard, and Michael and for Queen, Government and Parliament.

Eternal God, Fount of wisdom;
we ask you to bless the national leaders we have elected;
grant that through their discussions and decisions
we may solve our problems effectively

and enhance the well-being of our nation,
and achieve together a fairer and more united society.

Lord, in your mercy; ***hear our prayer***

Lord, we pray too at this time for all those living in Eaton Bray, in Dyers Road and The Orchards as well as for our Archdeacon and for Diocesan Officials as well as for our neighbours and for each other.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit – thinking especially of those who may have been affected in any way by the corona virus – whether infected themselves or concerned about loved ones, or who find themselves isolated as a result of observing precautionary measures. We pray that their trust in you will be rewarded.

Lord God, whose son, Jesus Christ, understood people's fear and pain before they spoke of them, we pray for those in hospital; surround the frightened with your tenderness; give strength to those in pain; hold the weak in your arms of love, and give hope and patience to those who are recovering.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

Lord, hear us too as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ, especially those whose years mind falls at this time, thinking of all the families who cannot properly mark the loss of their loved ones, and we offer prayers too for all who mourn their loved ones.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

Lord, we ask for that quietness of mind and spirit which reflects the stillness in the heart of God, as a calm sea reflects the shining stars. enable us, Lord, to hear the still, small voice of eternity speaking through the sounds of time, that we may dwell in peace and be one with your love.

Merciful Father ***accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.***

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that 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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

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**

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.
For you have created all things,
and by your will they have their being.
You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed us for God.

From every tribe and language and nation,
**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
**be blessing and honour and glory and might
for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)**

*We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of
fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person,
nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus
our Lord.*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or
if you would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.
(admin@stmaryseatonbray.org.uk)*

Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

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