



The Methodist Church
Bury St Edmunds Circuit.
WORSHIP SHEET FOR 13TH
SEPTEMBER 2020

Welcome to worship

Be still, you may like to light a candle. Take some time to remember and focus on God's loving presence with each one of us, wherever we are.

Call to Worship : Psalm 51: 10-12

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Hymn: StF 113 O worship the King, all glorious above
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dv2BqFgm6_M&pbjrel=101

O worship the King all-glorious above,
O gratefully sing his power and his love:
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

O tell of his might and sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
whom angels delight to worship above!
Your ransomed creation, with glory ablaze,
in true adoration shall sing to your praise!
Robert Grant (1779-1838)

Prayer of Praise

Thank you Lord God for the opportunity of worship,
for the freedom to be amongst your family
meeting together in your house,
and in the warmth of your embrace

Thank you that in worship we can put aside,
the uncertainties of this world and rest
upon the certainties of the Kingdom,
for your promises are not changeable
as those of a politician might be,
but immovable and eternal

Thank you that we can bring to your feet
all the hurts and fears that trouble us,
and leave them there,
knowing that your strength and assurance
are all that we require

Thank you that as we draw near in worship,
we are transported
from a world of concerns and fears,
to a place where we can be at peace in your presence,
find healing, wholeness and refreshment.
Thank you Lord God for the opportunity of worship.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Your forgiveness is total,
no notebook,
tape recorder
or post-it note
to remind you of that moment
when.....
You take our confession,
offered with hands outstretched
and gently,
like the loving
heavenly Father that you are,
put it to one side
to be forgotten.
No grudges, no itching for judgement.
No resentment or ill-will.
Not like us,
who find it easy to say sorry
but so hard to forgive,
absolutely.
Forgive us, Father,
that we are often more willing
to accept forgiveness,
than to forgive.
More willing to accept your love,
than to share it with those
who have hurt us.
Teach us to forgive,
as you forgive.

Silence

Assurance of Pardon

As we recognise God's love for us and as we receive his
forgiveness, we hear some words from psalm 103:

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow
to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour
his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay
us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west, so far has he
removed our transgressions from us.

Amen. Thanks be to God

Hymn: StF 416 There's a wideness in God's mercy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kamADrIPEDs>

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in Heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of our mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the Head.

There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.

If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be illumined
By the grace of Christ our Lord.
F.W.Faber (1814-1863)

Gospel Reading: Matthew 18: 21-35

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

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, cancelled 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. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

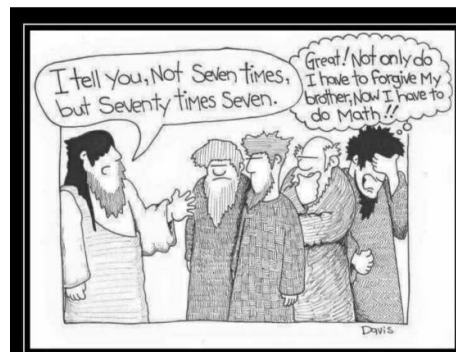
²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

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."

FORGIVE EACH OTHER
(because it's easier than math. Math is hard.)



Reflection

Every so often the cartoon printed above does the rounds on Facebook and every time I see it I have a wry smile. It makes me chuckle because I'm not a keen mathematician and have a lot of sympathy with Peter's exclamation – forgiveness and maths, both hard! It also

makes me think. The comment above 'forgive because it's easier than maths, maths is hard' needs some reflection, not least because of the irony hidden in it. Both forgiveness and maths take hard work and practice and forgiveness can be one of the most difficult and challenging things that we ever do.

I remember going to an exhibition several years ago called 'The F word'. It was run by 'The Forgiveness Project' a British based charity that uses stories from people who have experienced crime, violence and conflict to explore ideas of forgiveness. I read accounts from individuals who had experienced the genocide in Rwanda, IRA bombings, from both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and who had been perpetrators and victims of violent crime. Some had been able to offer or receive forgiveness, some were journeying through the process of forgiveness and reconciliation and some were very honest about the fact that they felt they would never be able to forgive. One thing that was clear through all of the accounts is that the act of forgiveness is a complex, ongoing process and is more than just a simple word.

Jesus' parable today sets us up with a challenge. In the story, the king represents God and we his people are the servants. The debts are not money, but the things that we do that offend others and that offend God. We may not feel that we have huge 'debts' in terms of violence or murder, but undoubtedly the thousands of small petty sins that we are all guilty of each day. When we come to God in our prayers of confession, these are wiped away. The parable then challenges us to do the same with our fellow human beings and here is where things are difficult; forgiveness is to be total – no grudges, no reminders of past faults.

To forgive others as God forgives us is a huge challenge and as such it is one where we need God's help, so it is good that we pray about this every time that we say the Lord's Prayer. We pray 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us' and perhaps sometimes the words trip off our tongues rather too easily. A challenge might be that when we say the Lord's Prayer we cast though our minds to think if there is anyone that we need to work on forgiving each time.

Forgiveness is difficult. It is hard work and it takes energy, effort and grace. It is also something that is immensely beneficial, not just for the one who is forgiven, but also for the one who forgives. Nadia Bolz Webber describes forgiveness as being like a huge pair

of bolt cutters which can cut through chains of resentment and guilt that bind those on both sides of a sinful action together. Forgiveness offers freedom to the one who is forgiven, but it also offers freedom for the one who forgives as they say to themselves, to God and the world "this act of sin has no more power over me, I chose to let it go".

In all of our offering and receiving forgiveness we are comforted and encouraged by having the ultimate role model in Jesus. Jesus did not just teach about radical forgiveness, he practised it too, forgiving all who betrayed, tortured, condemned and crucified him. Jesus recognised the freedom that forgiveness brings and freely gave his life to offer that freedom to all. Therefore when we approach the difficult business of forgiveness, we can do so with the power and the strength of Christ to guide our words and actions.

As with maths, practice makes perfect. Let us seek to practise offering forgiveness to others, even as we receive it from our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: StF 423 Forgive our sins as we forgive

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wR_pOuLAMWg

1. '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.
2. How can your pardon reach and bless
the unforgiving heart,
that broods on wrongs and will not let
old bitterness depart?
3. In blazing light your cross reveals
the truth we dimly knew:
what trivial debts are owed to us,
how great our debt to you!
4. Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls,
and bid resentment cease;
then, bound to all in bonds of love,
our lives will spread your peace.

Rosemund E Herklots (1905-1987)

Prayers

Spirit of Unity, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for your Church
in all its many forms and manifestations:
for the churches in our neighbourhood and circuit;
We pray for those in our churches who are leaders and
inspirers,

those who are discerners and listeners,
those who are learners and workers.
Weave us together
to strengthen our witness.

Spirit of unity, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who lead communities:
leaders of nations and leaders of states;
those who lead cities and those who lead hamlets;
those who elect and those elected.
Call us together
to strengthen our solidarity.

Spirit of unity, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own community:
for people we know and those who are strangers;
for those who call the shots
and those who feel powerless,
for the young and energetic,
for the old and wise,
for the weak and needy.
Bring us together
to serve one another.

Spirit of unity, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the suffering:
for those who are sick,
for those who are homeless and alienated,
for those who are stateless
or seeking a livelihood far from home,
for those who are afraid.
May they know your love through us, and the actions we
take.

Spirit of unity, **hear our prayer.**

Spirit of unity, mystery of wholeness,
To your strength, to your love, to your insight,
we offer our prayers. Amen.

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

Our Father...

Prayer over our gifts

Lord you bless us with so much and we give you thanks
for all your gifts, especially your Son Jesus and the life
that we receive through him. Accept the gifts that we
offer and our lives that we return in your service, that
they may glorify you and be signs of your love in the
world. **Amen.**

Hymn: StF 424 God forgave my sin in Jesus name

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFV00VeKdlw>

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name
I've been born again in Jesus' name
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His love as He told me to

He said freely freely
You have received
Freely freely give
Go in My name
And because you believe
Others will know that I live

All pow'r is giv'n in Jesus' name
In earth and heav'n in Jesus' name
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His pow'r as He told me to

He said freely freely
You have received
Freely freely give
Go in My name
And because you believe
Others will know that I live

God gives us life in Jesus' name
he lives in us in Jesus' name
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his peace as he told me to

He said freely freely
You have received
Freely freely give
Go in My name
And because you believe
Others will know that I live
Carol Owens (b. 1931)

A prayer of dismissal

May the peace of God reign in this place
and the love of God forever hold you tight,
May the Spirit of God flow through your life
and the joy of God uphold you day and night.

Grace

We say together...

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all
forever more. Amen.**

Some prayers taken from www.faithandworship.com
Intercessions by Ana Gobledale
Image courtesy of Facebook, author unknown
CCLI:7749