

Worship at home – 13th September

Key Scriptures: Matthew 18:21-35

Key Themes:

Forgiveness and the building up of relationships.

Call to Worship:

Come to the God who knows us, to the God who created our very being. Come to the God who knows our frailties, and who loves and cherishes us beyond all measure. Come to the God who held us while we have been apart, and now binds us together as we gather again. Come let us worship our God.

Hymn: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise;
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up and follow thee;
rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love!
interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace;
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm;
O still, small voice of calm.

John G. Whittier

Prayers:

Our desire, our need, our yearning draws us together to worship God. Unexplainable, unimaginable, unbelievable, incomprehensible love. It pulls at our heart strings, tugs at our emotions turns our eyes beyond the seeing. All-encompassing God, just as we are, we come. After so long of worshipping alone we come to worship you together this day.

Teach us, O God, how to treat you, how to know you, how to love you, how to learn of you, how to do as you would have us do. Teach us, above all, how to show those same things to those around us, and those whose lives meet ours, those who rub alongside us each day, and those who flit briefly by.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Forgiving God, more willing to forgive than often we are to confess, help us to see our failings, to see where we fall short, and see where we deceive ourselves. Where we close our eyes and ears to the ripples of our wrongdoing. May we breathe in the reality of our actions, the need to change, the depth of our unworthiness. We come before you, seeking forgiveness. (Silence)

Now let us breathe in the power of your forgiveness, and breathe out the need to live and love in the shadow of your forgiveness of us, that we may forgive as you have forgiven us.

Amen.

Psalm 103:1-13**The Love of God**

- 103** Praise the LORD, my soul!
All my being, praise his holy name!
- ² Praise the LORD, my soul,
and do not forget how kind he is.
- ³ He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
- ⁴ He keeps me from the grave
and blesses me with love and mercy.
- ⁵ He fills my life with good things,
so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.
- ⁶ The LORD judges in favour of the oppressed
and gives them their rights.
- ⁷ He revealed his plans to Moses
and let the people of Israel see his mighty deeds.
- ⁸ The LORD is merciful and loving,
slow to become angry and full of constant love.
- ⁹ He does not keep on rebuking;
he is not angry forever.
- ¹⁰ He does not punish us as we deserve
or repay us according to our sins and wrongs.
- ¹¹ As high as the sky is above the earth,

so great is his love for those who honour him.
12 As far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our sins from us.
13 As a father is kind to his children,
so the LORD is kind to those who honour him.

Reflection:

- A Psalm of great comfort.
- A Psalm that reassures us of God's love, protection and forgiveness.
- A psalm of confidence that we can trust in the Lord for all things.
- Monday saw the re-opening of schools, and the return to some sort of "normal" for our children at least.
- Theo was so excited.
- He left me at the school gate, met up with his friends, and didn't even look back.
- I was the one who was left bereft.
- The house is quiet, and in the silence doubts and fears creep in.
- "Will he be ok?"
- "Will he be safe?"
- And then I read this Psalm reminding me that God is in control
- That if I hold on to that everything will be fine.
- That is not to say we should throw caution to the wind.
- Of course we need to do all the things that we have been told to do, in order to keep us, and those we love safe.
- But we also need to allow God to be the God of love and mercy that we can put our faith in.

Reading: **Matthew 18:21-35** - The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

21 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?"

22 "No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven,²³ because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. ²⁴ He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. ²⁵ The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. ²⁶ The servant fell on his knees before the king. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay you everything!' ²⁷ The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.

28 "Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he said. ²⁹ His fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!' ³⁰ But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. ³² So he called the servant in. 'You worthless slave!' he said. 'I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just

because you asked me to. ³³ You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.' ³⁴ The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount."

³⁵ And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Reflection:

- With his question of how many times should we forgive, and his suggested answer of seven, Peter is still living under Old Testament rules.
- With the idea of a Jubilee every seven years when debts are cancelled and things are re-stored.
- But Jesus wants to bring in a new world order where forgiveness is a lifestyle not an equation.
- Jesus once again uses story to illustrate his point.
- The amounts of money quoted in the story are less important than the actions.
- One man is forgiven a huge debt by the king
- While that same man refuses to forgive a small debt from his fellow servant.
- It is about fairness as well as forgiveness.
- I guess there have been times in our lives where we have felt that things are not fair.
- I guess also there have been times when we have needed forgiveness or when we could or should have forgiven others.
- But it is not always easy is it?
- Forgiveness and forgetting are two very different things I think, and sometimes we might get the two confused.
- I also think that not forgiving and hold a grudge are also very different.
- We are asked to forgive, that is "to stop feeling anger or resentful towards someone for an offence, flaw or mistake" – dictionary definition.
- But it is the anger inside us that is the problem, as that anger is in affecting the person but it is affecting us.
- However, it is often easier said than done.
- Today, is there someone who you need to forgive?
- If so, maybe, today is the day to begin the healing inside you.
- Perhaps we are pleased when in Jesus' story the unforgiving servant gets his comeuppance, but lets not get too cheerful as Jesus relates this right back to the disciples and warns them not to fall into the same trap.
- Let us try to offer forgiveness to others as God has offered full and complete forgiveness to us.
- **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession:

Jesus' parables inspire us to pray for those who forgive us,

For big things and small....

For those who do not forgive, no matter what...

For those who do not know how to forgive...

For those who do not want to forgive...

For those who have not been forgiven...

God of forgiveness, for them all, we pray.

We continue to pray for those who have started new jobs or schools recently. For those Ministers who have taken us ne appointments, and for the new President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference.

We pray for those we know who are sick, lonely or in need of our prayers at this time, we think particularly of:

Paul Davies – Seaton
Pam Lucas – Seaton
Brain Margetts – Dalwood
Mary Long - Axminster
Mary Berry – Dalwood.
Audrey Hicks – Axminster

We remember those who have died:

Marjorie Cannon – Seaton
Dorothy Gladwin – Seaton / Colyton

Amen

Hymn: God forgave my sin in Jesus' name

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 power is given in Jesus' name,
In earth and heaven in Jesus' name;
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His power 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)

Blessing:

Into a world of noise and confusion; into a world that bewilders and even bemuses us at times; into a world of delight and regret;
Into a world of hope and fear; into a world that is ever changing, we go with the message of an unchanging God who gave his all that we might live life to the best of our ability. God of all, go with us and within us, this and every day.

Amen