

# **Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity**

Prayers, Readings, Reflection and Song.

“Welcome to another short act of worship for the Parish Church of St Martin. For those who are able to follow it as written, I hope it offers some comfort, encouragement and a sense of being together despite the distance between us.”

Rev Jonny



*Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you,  
before you and within you.*

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

*All* **Amen.**

The Lord be with you

*All* **And also with you**

It is in our confession where we realize our desire for God  
and our hope for God's mercy. It is in admitting the truth of  
our lives that we take the first step toward wholeness and  
healing. So let us make our confession, first in silent  
prayer.

May your loving mercy come to me, O Lord,  
and your salvation according to your word:  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light to my path:  
Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

O let your mercy come to me that I may live,  
for your law is my delight:  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy on us,  
forgive us our sins,  
and bring us to everlasting life.  
**Amen.**

*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.

*All*    **Amen.**

## **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

*First Reading, Romans 14: 1-12*

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 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 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 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.

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

*Gospel Reading, from Matthew 18: 21-35*

Then Peter came and said to him, “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.  
**All Praise to you, O Christ**

## *Reflection*

I spoke with you last week about forgiveness, and of its fundamental importance in our relationships with one another, and in God's relationship with us.

I spoke about how we can, by our unforgiveness, bind ourselves and others into cycles of resentment and bitterness; and I spoke of how by our forgiving we can set one another and all creation free.

I stand by all that said, and as we can see from our readings today, the primacy of forgiveness remains at the heart of the Good News that Jesus came to proclaim.

But I recognise, too, that there is far more to forgiveness than what I was able to say last week, and we should never assume – or blithely say – that forgiveness is easy, or straightforward or a cure-all. To do so, would rob forgiveness of its true power. It would be a false hope.

I just want to share a few thoughts that have come to me over the week, and which might just add a bit more colour to the canvas.

Firstly, there is an important difference between 'always forgiving' and 'forgiveness always being within reach'. Peter asks this of Jesus, 'how many times should I forgive', and Jesus replies, 'Seventy times seven.' The implication is that there is nothing we should not forgive, and no end to the forgiveness we offer. Now if we take that at face value, it's going to be pretty difficult – pretty damaging even – to live this way.

Can I really, always, instantaneously, jump to forgive the offence against me? Is it really as simple as that? What if we think about this slightly differently and rather than always rushing to forgive, we say to ourselves – 'whatever has happened to me, I live in a reality where forgiveness will always be possible'. Do you see the distinction?

It's not so much a prescription for action: 'you have been wronged you must forgive'. But rather an invitation to a generous and graceful mindset: 'I have been wronged, this hurts. But whatever happens, I live within the reality of grace, and forgiveness is always within reach.'

Let's not pretend that that's easy either. We can all imagine hurts in our lives – or crimes against others – when even the prospect of forgiveness seems out of the question, off the table. Some things, we might say, are 'unforgivable'.

But can we say that. Can something be 'unforgivable'. If forgiveness is foundational to the nature of God – how can something be beyond God's forgiveness? It would be like saying something or someone is 'irredeemable'. Can we say that? That anything in God's creation is beyond the redemption of God? Or 'un-lovable'. If God's love, and forgiveness and redemption are truly of the nature of God, can they have limits?

I don't believe so. As Paul says in Romans 8, For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the reality in which we live and breathe and have our being – a reality that is saturated by the love and grace of God. When we believe in the power of this Christ-like reality, then we accept that forgiveness is always ready and waiting in the wings. Every time, even seventy times seven.

And the other reflection which I wanted to share is this.

Forgiveness is not our work alone. It is something we participate in with God. Remember that.

The weight of forgiveness is not ours to carry on our own, but is a burden that is shared by God. So, when we have been hurt – and when forgiveness seems a million miles from our grasp, if it's even possible at all, we must take heart. God will be with us every step of the way.

God looks on the sinner and is ready to forgive. But our forgiveness cannot look like God's forgiveness because we are not God! We live in the mess and the brokenness of human relationships, and we know that forgiveness requires many things to heal the hurt. Time, space, patience, contrition, restitution. If we do not allow for these healing processes to be gone through, then our forgiveness will be meaningless.

Like a physical wound – like a cut on your hand – it needs to be cleaned, tended to, bandaged, and the muscles and skin need time to re-knit together, and there may always be a scar. So it is with relationships. We cannot just stick a plaster of forgiveness onto the bleeding sore, and forget about what lies beneath.

God is always ready to forgive and loves us beyond all measure and manner of sin. We participate in that forgiveness, but we need time and space and care to achieve it.

But always, we work with God. In our prayer, our fellowship, and our love, we are co-workers with God in the great tapestry of His creation. We are not the architects, but we are the stewards of his creation – and that includes the relationships between us. So we Co-create, we co-redeem and we co-forgive with God. None of us can do any of this alone.

We live a new reality of Grace, thanks to the life and death and rising of Jesus, in which forgiveness is always within reach. And we work with God to make the new reality complete, by creating, loving and redeeming alongside him, every step of the way.  
Amen.

### *Prayers of Intercession*

*Pray for one another – those in our church community*

*Pray for the Parish, the Island and the World*

*Pray for the sick, the isolated, the anxious and depressed*

*Pray for the dying, and those who mourn*

*Pray for yourselves, and for your own needs*

Lord in your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

*The Intercessions may end as follows*

Merciful Father

**All Accept these prayers**

**for the sake of your son,**

**our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

### *The Peace*

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,  
since as members of one body you are called to peace.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*All* **and also with you.**

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us

*All* **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.**

### *The Blessing.*

The God of all grace,  
who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,  
establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith;  
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and  
the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*All* **In the name of Christ. Amen.**