

Worship in the Home: September 13, 2020

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Worship in the Home

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost Lectionary 24 September 13, 2020

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

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.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray. One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

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

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

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: Genesis 50:15-21

After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.

¹⁵Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as God is doing today. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way Joseph reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 103:1-13

¹Bless the LORD, ¹ O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless God's ¹ holy name.

²Bless the LORD, ¹ O my soul,
and forget not ¹ all God's benefits—

³who forgives ¹ all your sins
and heals all ¹ your diseases;

⁴who redeems your life ¹ from the grave
and crowns you with steadfast ¹ love and mercy;

⁵who satisfies your desires ¹ with good things
so that your youth is renewed ¹ like an eagle's.

⁶O LORD, you provide ¹ vindication
and justice for all who ¹ are oppressed.

⁷You made known your ¹ ways to Moses
and your works to the children of Israel.

⁸ LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and abounding in ¹ steadfast love;

⁹you will not al- ¹ ways accuse us,
nor will you keep your anger forever.

¹⁰You have not dealt with us according ¹ to our sins,
nor repaid us according to ¹ our iniquities.

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is your steadfast love for ¹ those who fear you.

¹²As far as the east is ¹ from the west,
so far have you removed our transgressions from us.

¹³As a father has compassion ¹ for his children,
so you have compassion for those who fear ¹ you, O LORD.

Second 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.

¹Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ²Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³Those 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. ⁴Who 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.

⁵Some 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. ⁶Those 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.

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸ 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. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰Why 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. ¹¹For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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

²¹Peter 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?" ²²Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³"For this reason the **kingdom** of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, 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. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But 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.' ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So 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.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think of this:

The readings accuse us: like Joseph's brothers, we are afraid of people we have betrayed. Like Paul's readers, we often argue with each other about issues that do not matter. Like Peter in Matthew, we want to limit our forgiveness of others. But One who is greater than Joseph is here. Jesus Christ was thrown into a deeper pit than Joseph when he was taken to the cross. Yet, in the resurrection he has become an even greater source of forgiveness and bread. Like the fictional king of the parable, God in Christ has forgiven us — each one of us — an impossible

debt: 10,000 talents being something like 150,000 years of salary for a skilled worker. Strengthened by that forgiveness, poured over us today by the Spirit alive in this word, we are enabled again and again to forgive our neighbor whose debt to us, by comparison, is like only a few weeks of salary. Renewed in this mercy, we will live and die to the Lord.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 605), "O Christ, Our Hope" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 604). [Links to hymns in the public domain](#) are provided below.

[O Christ, Our Hope](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, responding to each petition with the words "receive our prayer."

God of open arms, make Christians into signs of your gracious welcome, to both members and newcomers, whether meeting physically or digitally. Strengthen faith through Bible studies and Sunday schools, confirmation classes and youth ministries, and nurture new ventures for education and growth. Bless bishops, pastors, and deacons for their work in this unprecedented time.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

God of lands and seas, continue your care for your creation. Where human selfishness has brought ruin and destruction, we ask you to heal and [renew your](#) earth. Preserve the lands from fire and storm. Protect the sources of food that your creatures need for life.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

God of justice, lead the nations away from the ways of violence. Guide the United Nations and other organizations that seek reconciliation across national borders. Show families, neighborhoods, and nations how to welcome diversity while sharing common ground. Preserve our election season from abuse and rancor.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

God of our homeland, visit the American cities that are addressing local racism. Stand with both protesters and police, that civil society may be preserved and improved. Bring both healing and justice to our land.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

God of the sufferers, visit prisons and care homes with health and hope. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor. Deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger and provide safety to migrants. Protect firefighters and first responders. Heal the sick, especially those we name here before you:

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

God of goodness, once more we beg for a way through the pandemic. Comfort the afflicted. Support medical workers. Prepare a vaccine.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

God of tender power, we live to you. Hear now, we pray, the desires of our hearts.

A longer period of silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have led us in the faith, especially those we commemorate this week: John Chrysostom, bishop Cyprian, Hildegard of Bingen, and Dag Hammarskjöld. Hold us with them in your everlasting love.

A brief silence.

O God, you are full of compassion;

receive our prayer.

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

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you might now sing or read "When We Are Living" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 639); "In Thee Is Gladness" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 867). Links to hymns in the public domain are provided below.

[In Thee Is Gladness](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

We thank you, O God, for your life-giving Word,
for calling creation into being,
declaring forgiveness from the cross,
and delivering the spirit of rebirth.

We praise you, O God, for your Word:

we praise you, O God, for your Word.

Your word is a lamp lighting our path,
a mirror reflecting our selves,
a shield providing us refuge,
a fire burning for justice and truth.

Your word is sweeter than honey:

it nourishes our bodies like milk,
it sustains your people like bread.

We receive your promises, more treasured than gold.

We bless you, O God, for your Word:

we bless you, O God, for your Word.

Open our ears to your prophets, apostles, and saints,
and to all the cries of the needy.

Breathe into your church the mighty Spirit of Christ,
that heeding your voice of beauty and power
we are strengthened to serve wherever we are called.

To you, Father, Son, and Spirit – the Source, Word, and Breath –
we offer our thanks for your life-giving Word:

we offer our thanks for your life-giving Word.

Amen.

Amen.

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Then speak the Blessing:

Mothering God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life. **Amen.**

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Bless God's Holy Name](#);" "[I Come with Joy](#);" "[Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday (Holy Cross Day) John 3:13-17. **Tuesday** Romans 14:13—

15:2. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, martyr, died around 258))

Genesis 50:22-26. **Thursday** (commemoration of Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, died 1179)

Psalms 145:1-8. **Friday** (commemoration of Dag Hammarskjöld, renewer of society, died 1961) 2

Corinthians 13:5-10. **Saturday** Zephaniah 2:13-15. **Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost** Jonah 3:10—4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16.

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

To purchase a copy of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Noah Klenken (Fred Fixsen's Nephew), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Bill Warner, David Warner, Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Terry Newgard, Judy Wingses.

- ✓ **Flu Shots will be given here at Grace on October 22, 9:00 – 11:00. They are requesting a sign-up sheet, just to enable us to spread time to enable to keep the 6' distance. Also asking for participants to wear mask.**
- ✓ **Thank you to those who clean the Church following Worship.**

Pastor Bill Sass - Sermon for Sunday, September 6, 2020
"Building Bridges"

Russell Dalby worked on an assembly line for many years. His job was very monotonous. Work was long, sometimes boring, and often tiring. What made it all bearable was the people he worked with, day in, and day out. They became his friends. He experienced a sense of community with them.

Russell described many after-work activities that he and other co-workers participated in—pot lucks, Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners. There were times when co-workers celebrated a new birth. There were times when people were sick and in the hospital, and people at work responded. When someone experienced a tragedy in their life, everyone would pull together for them, offering help in many forms.

Russell told of his personal tragedies, and the time he was embarrassed to go back to work. When he returned to work, however, he discovered fellow employees were there for him. There was one special co-worker named Hazel, who helped him through some difficult times in his life. She encouraged him when he was ready to give up. Now, Russell has retired. He misses his co-workers a lot. He still remembers their names and birthdays. They are a very special part of his life.

The relationships we have with other people are very important, are they not? This Labor Day weekend, we might think about some people we work with, and how important they are to us. We also might give some thought to relationships we have with each other in this church. The church, at its very best, is a community of love, helping one another, building each other up, and praying for one another.

Since we do not live in a perfect world, there are strains placed on our relationships. Unfortunately, this even happens at church. Harsh words are spoken; feelings are hurt; a long-lasting relationship is threatened. It is at this point, Jesus offers us some very practical suggestions.

THE FIRST SUGGESTION IS THIS: SOMEBODY HAS TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP. Jesus said, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault, when the two of you are alone." That's good advice. Somebody has to take the first step.

There are times when we need to build bridges. There are times when we need to take the first step. There is a profound reason why this is true.

WE NEED EACH OTHER. That's true in our families. It's true on the job. And it's true in the church.

One hundred and fifty-five persons were flying home from Australia on Friday, February 24, 1989. A cargo door failed, and a huge hole was ripped open in the side of the plane. Nine persons perished when pressurized air inside blew them into thin, rarefied air at 24,000 feet.

Kerry Lappan, age 31, was sitting by the fateful hole that day. After the plane was safely on the ground, Kerry described what happened. "The whole plane was falling to pieces" she said, "and I thought, "This is it!" but there was a man in front of me." Kerry did not know the man, but in her own words, "he was—a wonderful, wonderful man. He held my hand," she said, "and he comforted me. It was so loving, and so comforting, to have someone's hand to hold."

In truth, that is what the church is all about. There are times when our world is coming apart, and we need someone to hold our hand—to listen to us—to pray for us. The church fosters a sense of community among people who come from different backgrounds. Once someone enters our fellowship, it is our responsibility to be a caring community. It's always comforting to have someone's hand to hold. We need one another. That is why we take the first step toward reconciliation. But there is one more matter to be considered.

WHEN WE EARNESTLY SEEK RECONCILIATION, JESUS IS IN OUR MIDST. That's how this passage concerning controversy in the church ends. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

A man lived in constant fear and bitterness for twenty-eight years. He could not sleep, and would wake up at night, screaming, in a cold sweat. He had not laughed for many years. The

man told his pastor what happened to him many years before that caused deep sadness to hang over him. While serving his country overseas during the Second World War, he was in charge of thirty-three men. They became tapped by enemy gunfire. With deep sorrow in his eyes, the man prayed desperately that God would get them out of that mess. It was not to be. He sent his men out two by two, only to watch them get killed. In the early morning hours, he was able to escape with six men, four who were seriously wounded. From that experience, he felt God was very far from him. His heart was filled with rage, bitterness, and guilt.

His pastor said, "Don't you know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can enter that old painful memory, and heal it, so that it will no longer control you?" Together, they prayed Jesus would go back those twenty-eight years, and walk through that day with him. "Please, Lord," the pastor prayed, "Draw out the hurt, and hate, and sorrow, and set him free." He asked for peaceful sleep to be one of the evidences of God's healing work.

The next week, this man had a sparkle in his eyes, and a brightness on his face. "Every night I have slept soundly, and each morning I have awakened with a hymn on my mind," he proudly exclaimed, "And I am happy...happy for the first time in twenty-eight years." He was healed through the power of prayer. My guess is that he was also healed by sharing his burden with his pastor. There is healing in prayer. There is also healing in Christian fellowship—in Christian listening, and Christian love. When we are in a proper relationship with one another, we sense that someone else is there as well. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We appreciate Christ's teaching that He is the vine. We draw our life from Him. We are His people. His family. That is why when there is strife or disagreement, someone must take the first step. Someone must build the bridge. We need one another. More important, we need to know that He is in our midst.

AMEN!

Pastoral Message for September 9, 2020

Subject:

Work Mules...Did you hear the story of the old Missouri farmer who had two mules used for field work? They were named Willing and Able. Sometimes Willing was willing to work, but was not able. Sometimes Able was able to work, but was not willing. Sometimes both Willing and Able were both willing and able to work, but they were not ready to work because of a loose shoe, or harness not hitched right. But every so often, they were ready, willing, and able to work, and not too stubborn to work, either. Then, and only then, the farmer got some field work done. Then they worked as a team, and were useful.

There's a lesson for us humans in this story too. We can be useful in God's mission field when we also are ready, willing, and able, and not too stubborn, to follow God's guidance.

"Be not like horse or mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not keep with you." So says the Psalmist in 32:9. We need to be patient to see and understand how God is working in our lives each day, but with an eye to the future, as well.

In the New Testament Letter of James, the author writes, "For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes then that one is perfect, able to bridle the whole body also. If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs."

Several weeks ago, our Gospel was Matthew 14:22-33, about Jesus walking on the sea. Our closing hymn was "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me." It closes with, "May I hear thee say to me; Fear not, I will pilot thee."

Of course, we have to be ready, willing, and able to follow Jesus as our Savior and pilot. Make sure He doesn't need a bit and bridle to keep us in line, as with a horse or mule. Encourage our good values and behaviors. Don't be too stubborn to follow God's guidance.

Peace;

Pastor Bill Sass