

September 13th Worship
15th Sunday After Pentecost

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,
who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of
creation.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of
one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Faithful God,

have mercy on us.

**We confess that we are captive to sin
and cannot free ourselves.**

**We turn from your loving embrace
and go our own ways.**

**We pass judgment on one another
before examining ourselves.**

**We place our own needs before those of our
neighbors.**

**We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves.
Make us humble, cast away our transgressions,
and turn us again to life in you
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

Amen.

God hears the cries of all who call out in need,
and through his death and resurrection,
Christ has made us his own.

Hear the truth that God proclaims:

Your sins are forgiven in the name of ☩ Jesus
Christ.

Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness
to do God's work in the world.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

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.

Lesson – Psalm 103:8-13

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

⁹you will not always accuse us,
nor will you keep your anger forever.

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

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

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

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

Gospel – Matthew 18:21-35

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.”

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Do you ever learn a lesson, or hear something, that in hearing, learning, or experiencing it you think, “that’s something I really want to make regular in my life. That’s something that I want to not lose grip of. That’s something that I want to put into practice and have become normal for me in what I do.”

Do you ever have that experience where you get that, and then life moves on and for whatever reason you forget that thing that you were never going to forget?

For me it is always, never fails, the desire to use a planner. Scheduling and keeping track of what it is that I’m supposed to be doing and when and where I’m supposed to be doing it...is sometimes a challenge.

And, every single school year I would go through this period of thinking that that year was going to be different, and I would fill a planner with all of the assignments in the syllabus, and it wouldn’t be long that I would completely forget about it. It always seemed like a great idea but rarely, if ever, would I follow through.

Last week in our gospel text, we get one of those “we really shouldn’t forget this” lessons. We hear Jesus talk about forgiveness and the importance of remembering that what we bind on earth, what we hold tight to, what we don’t let go of on earth, we will be bound to in heaven. And, what we loose on earth, what we do let go of, we will have loosed in heaven. And we hear of the importance of forgiveness and how forgiveness feeds community. How forgiveness feeds communal relationships and how important community and the relationships we have are, and the role that forgiveness plays in those things.

And we came away from last week feeling really good. I personally came away from last week wanting to live into that forgiveness piece because it felt good. It felt good to hear those words and that reminder, and to look to the hope that is community and the role that forgiveness plays in it. And it started to have that feel of being one of those things that feels real good when we hear it or learn it...

But is easily forgotten

And so we come to today's Gospel text, and we are not allowed to just move on.

Peter comes and having heard this lesson himself, this idea of forgiveness, he comes to Jesus and says,

“dude, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? Okay. I like the idea of forgiveness, but how often? There's gotta be a little wiggle room, like I'm not supposed to continually forgive, right? Am I? How often do I need to do that work so eventually I can say ‘I've done what I need to do?’ How often should I do it? Seven times?”

You get this sense that when he proposes seven times, that he thinks he is throwing out some astronomical number. As though Jesus would caution him not to get carried away. Surely Jesus wouldn't ask him to do it THAT many times.

Jesus says, “no, not seven times, but I tell you 77 times.”

And he goes on to tell the story, the parable, of the unforgiving servant. It is a parable of a servant who has had their debts forgiven, and in turn goes and denies forgiveness to those who have debts with him.

And we are reminded of the question we must always ask ourselves when dealing with parables. Are these stories that really happened? Are they experiences that Jesus really witnessed or are they stories that Jesus uses to illustrate his points? And we start to look at this parable and, and again as we always do with parables, we ask ourselves,

Who are we in this story? Who is Jesus in this story? What other characters are at play?

There are times when these are difficult questions to answer, but this one seems pretty clear. For you and me as people of faith, and for those wondering if this life of faith is for them, we have heard this Gospel truth, that we have been forgiven. That is a promise that we, as a community of faith, a community of hope, know and believe to be true.

It's why we have a cross in the middle of our worship space. The hope of the resurrected Jesus is in the middle of our lives. It is in the middle of all that we do as church people. It's in the middle of our daily lives as a reminder of the forgiveness that we have received.

But beyond that, it's a reminder of the forgiveness that we are to extend. And it's, wait for it - You've maybe heard this before - It's difficult. It's a challenge. Because Peter asks very specifically, “so I just need to do this forgiveness thing seven times and call it good?” And Jesus says, “no, 77 times.” a number that seems unfathomable.

We are told this story of one who forgives and urges forgiveness. We remember last week that forgiveness breeds community and community breeds hope. And this urge to continually, up to and beyond that seemingly ridiculous number, is what Jesus calls us to do.

He calls us into continual community.

He hopes us into continual hope.

And we want to say we've done our part.

I heard recently someone who said, “so often we apologize for the wrongs of society.” But, in their saying this, there was a call to stop apologizing. Not because we shouldn't apologize, but because so often we think that all we need to do is apologize. To which this person responds, “don't.”

“Don't say sorry if you aren't going to try to stop doing what you are apologizing for. Don't say sorry to me for doing wrong to me if you aren't going to do what you need to do to stop wronging me,” is what they were asking.

And that challenges us. That makes this word of good news a little more difficult to grasp because as difficult as it is to forgive or ask for forgiveness, it's even more difficult to admit that maybe, just maybe, we could do what we need to do to right the wrong that's been done. Perhaps we need to go beyond simply saying, “I'm sorry for doing it,” because if we don't do what we need to do to right the wrong that has been done guess what? 77 more times we are going to be back here saying, “I'm sorry for what I've done.”

The beauty lies in that Jesus says, “forgive.”

The challenge is to think where that communal hope would bring us to if we did what we needed to do to stop needing to say, “sorry.”

I've tried this with my children. I've tried telling them, “you know what, stop saying sorry if you're not going to do what you need to do to stop doing what you're saying sorry for.”

They look at me really confused. I think we'll get there. I think we'll start to grasp what that means. But I also don't think they're the only ones that show that difficulty. In fact I think their confused looks beautifully capture the difficulty of hearing the importance of maybe admitting we have a role in writing what has been done wrong.

People of God, Jesus continues to call us into a communal hope.

Jesus doesn't let us move on from the lesson we just heard last week.

Jesus says forgiveness is a communal act of hope that we need to continually be engaged in for the hope and for the life of the community, because forgiveness is about relationship. And that is what matters most.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

You welcome us when we are weak in faith. Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Strengthen faith through Bible studies and Sunday schools, confirmation classes and youth ministries. Nurture new ministries of education and growth. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

The heights of the heavens show us the vastness of your steadfast love. Have compassion on your creation. Where human selfishness has brought ruin and destruction, we look to you to heal, renew, and redeem your world. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Bring healing and justice wherever harm is dealt. Provide vindication for all who are oppressed. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor; deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger, and guard refugees

fleeing famine, poverty, and war. Be with those in our midst who are suffering in mind, body, and spirit, whom we name now both silently and aloud. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Teach us to forgive. Remind us that you do not always accuse us. Still our tongues when we are tempted to pass judgment and argue over opinions. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise you. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

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

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

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

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

Thanks be to God

At Home Communion Liturgy

+ WORDS OF INSTITUTION +

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you Do this for the remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me." When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grape juice) +

LORD'S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION + In the mystery of Christ's resurrection, you shine light into the darkness, provide water that brings new life, and give bread that nourishes your people and frees us from our fear. Help us be witnesses of the resurrection and empower us to show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. AMEN +

BLESSING EACH OTHER + Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another's forehead or the back of their hand saying, "Child of God, marked as God's own, Jesus love you and will love you forever." Take turns until each household member has been blessed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Sanctuary Open for Prayer

Have you been feeling a disconnect from church, and perhaps a visit to church may be the salve your weary soul needs? On Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10 am – 12 pm and 2 pm – 4 pm the sanctuary will be open, with properly spaced areas, for folks to come in and have a moment of prayer.

As you enter the building you will be greeted by a bottle of hand sanitizer, followed by a stand with masks on it. If you don't have a mask, you will need to wear one.

As you enter the sanctuary, you will find 3 locations for you to choose from for a time of prayer: By the stained-glass windows, by the Prayer Wall, and by the Baptismal Font.

MASKS! MASKS! MASKS!

Masks have finally arrived and we are excited to see them around town! If you would like a mask please contact the church office. They are free, but we will appreciate a suggested \$5 free-will gift towards the purchase of future masks!

65 for 65 Appeal and the Purchase of Chairs for the Sanctuary

We have officially surpassed the 65 donor goal for our "65 for 65 Anniversary Appeal" and have shifted to a targeted ask for the purchase of the chairs, and disposition of the pews.

If you would like a piece of Good Shepherd history in the form of a pew we would be happy to accommodate that desire! If you wish to give a gift for a pew, we will gratefully accept. If you purchased a pew when they initially went into the sanctuary, you can claim that as well!

If you would like to purchase a chair, or a row of chairs, or a section of chairs, we will happily accommodate that as well! We have already received our first official gift for the purchase of 15 chairs!

Any funds raised over the cost of the chairs will be put towards the remaining balance on the Boiler Loan from the Good Shepherd Endowment Fund.