

Sunday, September 17, 2017
15th Sunday after Pentecost

INTRODUCTION

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.

*WELCOMING SONG

"I Will Sing, I Will Sing" vv. 1, 2, 5

**I will sing, I will sing
a song unto the Lord.
I will sing, I will sing
a song unto the Lord.
I will sing, I will sing
a song unto the Lord.
Alleluia, glory to the Lord.**

Refrain

**Allelu, alleluia, glory to the Lord.
Allelu, alleluia, glory to the Lord.
Allelu, alleluia, glory to the Lord.
Alleluia, glory to the Lord.**

**We will, come we will come
as one before the Lord.
We will, come we will come
as one before the Lord.
We will, come we will come
as one before the Lord.
Alleluia, glory to the Lord. *Refrain***

**Ev'ry knee shall bow
and ev'ry tongue confess,
ev'ry knee shall bow
and ev'ry tongue confess,
ev'ry knee shall bow
and ev'ry tongue confess,
that Jesus Christ is Lord. *Refrain***

***GATHERING SONG** *“Come, Now Is the Time to Worship”*

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God,
come. *(repeat)*

One day ev’ry tongue
will confess You are God.
One day ev’ry knee will bow.
Still the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose You now. *(repeat)*

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God,
come.
Come. Come. Come.

***GREETING**

P *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*
G And also with you.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P *O Lord God, merciful judge,*
G 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!

ANTHEM

“Lord, Lead Me, Lord”
Chancel Choir

Gilbert Martin

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 he is doing today. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Reflection

As you read this text, you may want to review what Joseph’s brothers did to him. (Read Genesis 37—just one story in a whole string of stories that illustrate that God did not choose Abraham and his descendants because of their wonderful love for each other and great moral character.) As this text begins, Joseph is the “vice-Pharaoh” in Egypt with lots of power, Joseph’s brothers are also living in Egypt, where they came with their father to escape the famine in their home country, and their father has just died. What is the fear of Joseph’s brothers? (verse 15) How do they try to finesse the situation? (verses 16-18) What is Joseph’s response? (verses 18-21) How does Joseph’s faith in God help him to see the situation he and his brothers are in? How have you experienced or witnessed God bringing good out of evil circumstances?

Psalms 103:1-13

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

²**Bless the LORD, | O my soul,
and forget not | all God’s benefits—**

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

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

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

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

⁷You made known your | ways to Moses
and your works to the chil- | dren of Israel.

⁸**LORD, you are full of compas- | sion and mercy,
slow to anger and abounding in | steadfast love;**

⁹you will not al- | ways accuse us,
nor will you keep your an- | ger forever.

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

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

¹²**As far as the east is | from the west,
so far have you removed our transgres- | sions from us.**

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

Reflection

What does it mean to “bless the Lord”? Why should we praise God? (verses 1-5) How does God act for “all who are oppressed”? (verse 6) In the times when we would expect God to be angry, how does God act? (verses 8-9) What is God’s relationship with the children of God? (verses 11-13) When you experience guilt and fear, how can this psalm comfort and empower you?

“10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)”

Refrain

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
O my soul;
worship His holy name.
Sing like never before,
O my soul;
I'll worship Your holy name.

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning,
it's time to sing Your song again.
Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me,
let me be singing when the evening comes. *refrain*

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger.
Your name is great and Your heart is kind.
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing;
ten thousand reasons for my heart to find. *refrain*

And on that day, when my strength is failing,
the end draws near, and my time has come;
still, my soul will sing Your praise unending
ten thousand years and then forevermore!

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
O my soul;
worship His holy name.
Sing like never before,
O my soul;
I'll worship Your holy name.
Worship Your holy name,
Lord, I'll worship Your holy name.
sing like never before,
O my soul;

I'll worship Your holy name,
worship Your holy name,
worship Your holy name.

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. ⁸If 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. ⁹For 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.

Reflection

In this text, Paul distinguishes between those who are “weak in faith,” who insist on following the rules about not eating meat offered to idols —which was almost all the meat available in the marketplace—and those who are “strong,” who say that those rules do not apply to those who believe in Christ. (See Paul’s discussion of this issue in his letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 8.) He continues this discussion in terms of how Christians are to act on the Sabbath in verses 5-6) How does he say that these Christians with differing opinions on how they are to act should treat one another? (verse 3, verse 6) What is the reason that we need to honor each other’s acting according to their own consciences? (verses 7-12) You may want to continue to read verses 13-23, in which Paul continues the discussion about why Christians should not judge one another. What issues are you aware of in the church today (perhaps in our own congregation, or the ELCA, or the whole church) in which we have differing opinions about how to believe or how to act? How does this text put such differences in perspective?

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

“Celtic Alleluia”

Alleluia, alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia.

***GOSPEL**

Matthew 18:21-35

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.”

Reflection

This text follows the Gospel reading from last week, when Jesus gives the disciples the command to forgive sins. Peter, always practical, wants to know the limits of this command from Jesus. What does he ask? (verse 21) What is Jesus’ answer? (verse 22) Then Jesus tells a parable. What does the king do for his slave? (verses 23-27) What does the slave then turn around and do? (verses 28-30) Have you ever been in the position of that slave? Are there any resentments you hold onto? What does it mean to “forgive your brother or sister from the heart”? Are there certainly are situations in which it is foolish to “forgive and forget,” such as when you have been abused by someone. How is forgiveness possible in such situations? Does forgiving mean going back to the situation or the relationship before a wrong occurred? How do we live a new life when we have experienced harm or hurt, or when we have inflicted it?

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

Kris Langdon

SERMON

“When Human Bonds Are Broken”

Rev. Roger Lenander

God, when human bonds are broken
and we lack the love or skill
to restore the hope of healing,
give us grace and make us still.

Through that stillness, with your Spirit
come into our world of stress,
for the sake of Christ forgiving
all the failures we confess.

You in us are bruised and broken:
hear us as we seek release
from the pain of earlier living;
set us free and grant us peace.

Send us, God of new beginnings,
humbly hopeful into life.
Use us as a means of blessing:
make us stronger, give us faith.

Give us faith to be more faithful,
give us hope to be more true,
give us love to go on learning:
God, encourage and renew!

***APOSTLES' CREED**

☑ I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen!

***PRAYER SONG**

“Cares Chorus”

I cast all my cares upon You
I lay all of my burdens
Down at Your feet
And anytime that I don't know
What to do
I will cast all my cares upon You

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all of God's creation.

A brief silence.

Good and gracious God, we pray for the church. Bless the ministries of congregations in our community. We especially lift up Pastor Philip and the South Sudanese Congregation. Unite us in the proclamation of your life-giving gospel. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Creator God, you spoke light into being, you separated the waters, you formed the dry land. Protect and enliven the creation you so love, and make us willing partners in its care. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For those who experienced the destructive forces of Hurricane Irma and the subsequent flooding and now endure the anguish and suffering from personal injury and the loss of property, Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For those called home to the Lord during this natural disaster of Hurricane Irma and the subsequent flooding, may they be granted rest and numbered among the saints and may their grieving loved ones be comforted by Your divine grace. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For all those involved in serving their neighbor during this time including the first responders and those assisting in the continuing relief efforts of the victims of Hurricane Irma and the subsequent flooding, strengthen them in mind, body and soul and inspire all of us to be charitable with our generosity to our brothers and sisters in their time of need. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of the nations, you love all tribes, peoples, and languages. We pray for all who govern. Give them wise and generous hearts for those they serve. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Divine Healer, calm the anxiety of those who are wrongly accused, who suffer under crushing debt, or who are in prison. Reassure those who are lonely, impatient, brokenhearted, homebound, hospitalized, or ill *especially Dee, Lin, Robert, and Linda*. We also pray for those we name before you aloud or silently in our hearts (*pause for 10 seconds*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this assembly; for our guests and visitors, for newcomers to this community, for those who are certain and those who doubt, and for all who seek you in this place. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Protect us, O God, we pray for all the men and women of our armed forces, at home and abroad. We especially lift up to you, Jason Shields. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We remember and give thanks for the faithful of every age who did not live to themselves but lived to you. Raise us with them on the last day. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting the power of Christ and the gifts of the Spirit. **Amen!**

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

☞ *The peace of Christ be with you always.*

☞ **And also with you!**

OFFERTORY

“Come, Share the Lord” vs 1 and vs 2 to *Fine*

**We gather here in Jesus' name,
his love is burning in our hearts like living flame;
for through the loving Son the Father makes us one:
Come, take the bread, come, drink the wine,
come, share the Lord.
No one is a stranger here,
everyone belongs;
finding our forgiveness here,
we in turn forgive all wrongs.**

**He joins us here, he breaks the bread,
the Lord who pours the cup is risen from the dead;
the one we love the most is now our gracious host:
Come, take the bread, come, drink the wine,
Come, share the Lord.**

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

Thank the Lord and sing his praise;
tell ev'ryone what he has done.
Let ev'ryone who seeks the Lord
rejoice and proudly bear his name.
He recalls his promises
and leads his people forth in joy
with shouts of thanksgiving.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P *God of life,*
C you give us these gifts of the earth, these resources of our life and our labor. Take them, offered in great thanksgiving, and use them to set a table that will heal the whole creation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Light. Amen!

***DIALOGUE**

P *The Lord be with you.*
C And also with you.
P *Lift up your hearts.*
C We lift them to the Lord.
P *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*
C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

***PREFACE**

P *It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. Fulfilling the promise of the resurrection, you pour out the fire of your Spirit, uniting in one body people of every nation and tongue. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:*

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of pow'r and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory, full of your glory.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

- P** *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.*
- 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 for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

***LORD'S PRAYER**

- P** *Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.*
- G** **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,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen!**

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

- P** *Speak to us, O Lord, in the breaking of the bread, and make us one with you.*

***BLESSING**

- P** *The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and
keep you in his grace.*
- G** **Amen!**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

- P** *Holy and compassionate God,*
- G** **in bread and wine you give us gifts that form us to be humble and courageous. May
your words come to life in our serving and in our witness, that we might speak a**

living voice of healing and justice to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our rock and our redeemer. Amen!

***BENEDICTION**

P *God, creator of all things, speaking reformation into being;
Jesus Christ, savior of the world, raising the dead;
Holy Spirit, living voice, calling and enlightening the church:
Almighty God, Father, \mp Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.*

G Amen!

***SENDING SONG**

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”

ELW 543

**“Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone.
Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own.
In my love’s baptismal river
I have made you mine forever.
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own.”**

**“Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.
Here you heard my dear Son’s story,
here you touched him, saw his glory.
Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure.”**

**“Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me.
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.
Here my Spirit’s power filled you,
here my tender comfort stilled you.
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.”**

***DISMISSAL**

L *Go in peace. Sound the good news.*

G Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

“Praise!”

Gilbert Martin