

Forgiveness



Call : This is the day the Lord has made. We will be glad and rejoice in it.

Hymn 88 Praise to the Lord

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vegvb1u5s4

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him,
for he is your health and salvation!
Come, all who hear; now to his temple draw near,
join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord,
who will prosper your work and defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy
shall daily attend you.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord,
above all things so wondrously reigning;
sheltering you under his wings,
and so gently sustaining!
Have you not seen all that is needful has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath,
come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen sound from his people again;
gladly forever adore him.

Prayer

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, All glory, honour and praise be yours this day. You are the Living God,
The maker of Heaven and earth And at the start of our worship today we want to say We love and adore you. Praise You Lord.

Merciful God, we are thinking about forgiveness today, And in the light of that, we praise You for who You are. You are so loving and compassionate. Always gracious and merciful. Your love never fails and that Your mercy is new every day. We worship You because You are a God who forgives. You do not turn away from us when we fail, but welcome us when we come to You with humble and repentant hearts. Thank You for the gift of forgiveness and for the freedom that comes from knowing we are loved and accepted by You.

But Lord, we confess that forgiveness is not always easy for us. Sometimes we hold onto anger, hurt and resentment. Sometimes we struggle to forgive those who have wronged us, and sometimes we find it difficult to ask others for forgiveness when we have caused hurt ourselves. Forgive us for the times we have allowed bitterness to take root in our hearts. Forgive us when we have judged others rather than shown them grace.
Help us to let go of the things we are holding onto. Give us the humility to admit when we are wrong, the courage to ask for forgiveness, and the grace to forgive others. Heal the places in our hearts where we have been hurt, and help us to trust You with the things we cannot change.

And Lord, we pray, help us to forgive ourselves. Having been compassionate and kind to others, help us to be kind to ourselves.

Father, we thank You for Your forgiveness. Thank You that our mistakes do not define us and that our failures do not separate us from Your love. Thank You for the people who have forgiven us and shown us grace. Thank You for the opportunities we have to make things right, rebuild relationships and begin again. Help us to carry the same spirit of forgiveness into our relationships with others. May we be people who are quick to forgive, willing to seek reconciliation, and ready to show the same grace that You have shown to us. Thank You for Your endless mercy, Your unfailing love and the fresh starts You give us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Hymn 495 Dear Lord and father

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsCLNuU6Td0>

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives Thy service find,
in deeper rev'rence, 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.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with Thee

the silence of eternity,
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.

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!

Bible readings

Genesis 33:1-13 : Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so, he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant." Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down. Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?" "To find favour in your eyes, my lord," he said. But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself." "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favour in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favourably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it. Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you." But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir." Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you. "But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favour in the eyes of my lord." So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth. After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. ²⁰ There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel

Matthew 18:21-35 : Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Hymn 615 Let Love be real

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go:

*As God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space
to grow*

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;

Reflection

I have to confess today that I very rarely preach on forgiveness. There! I've said it! The reason? Well, if truth be known, I'm aware that some many people have truly suffered at the hands of another. It is shocking just how many have been abused. And even when the abuse is over, it never truly leaves us. We may cover the scares that we carry, but they are there, nevertheless. People can be very cruel and if you have suffered at the hands of another... And then the preacher gets up and makes it sound so easy! When it's really not!

But I think I've been wrong in the past not to tackle it, because I really believe that when we forgive someone, then in fact, we are not freeing them necessarily, but we are definitely freeing ourselves. Carrying unforgiveness is like carrying heavy chains! Unforgiveness binds us and hold us back from experiencing the liberty God wants us to experience. It's like a dreadful disease, that eats away at the soul. Garry Ridgway murdered 49 women. At the trial family members were invited to come forward to speak. Here was their moment to talk directly to this man who had murdered their loved one. One woman wished him a "Long suffering cruel death". Another said, "he's going to go to Hell and that's where he belongs." But then Robert Rule, the father of 16 years old Janie Rule came forward. And this is what he said. "Mr Ridgeway. There are people here that hate you. I'm not one of them. You have made it difficult for me to live up to what I believe, and that is, what God has said to do, and that is to forgive. You are forgiven sir". It was as if time stood still. Even the judge looked a mixture of shocked / moved! Robert Rule was a mighty carrier of grace that day, and he poured it out on a underserving wicked man with such compassion and dignity that no one would ever forget it. I suspect that Robert Rule understood that to forgive another means freeing self, of a life of anger, bitterness and hatred. And maybe that's why Jesus said to Peter, in a roundabout way, "Don't count Peter! Just do it!"

Peter thought he had been so clever. "How many times should we forgive? Seven?" The community in which Jesus lived believed God only ever forgave someone three times, never a fourth. And if God only forgives three times, who are we to forgive more than that? But Peter suspected that wasn't enough, and he was right! So, he doubled the three and added an extra one, just in case, which made seven!

Jesus's responded by telling a story... About a man who had had a massive debt written off. He owed a king a huge debt! According to the biblical scholar A. R. S. Kennedy the debt was so huge that it would have taken an army of about 8,600 men to carry it, and each sack of coins would weigh approximately 60 lbs. If you then made of those carrying a bag line up, at a distance of a yard apart, the line would have been five miles long! The debt that servant owed was massive. But when he asked for patience, the king did more than that. He wiped the slate clean. Having had his debt wiped off, what did he do? Show the same kindness to others. Absolutely not. He happened across someone who owed him a hundred silver coins. Nothing compared to the debt he'd just had written off. Again, according to Kennedy, he could have carried that small amount in his pocket! And when his fellow servant asked for mercy and kindness, he was having none of it and had the guy thrown into prison. The king was furious and so the man was himself was also locked up until he could repay his debt! The moral of the story, forgive as God has forgiven you!

Every time we say the Lord's pray we say it! "Forgive us our debts and we forgive those debtors"! But do we mean it? And the truth is, every day He forgives us! Every day He shows us kindness love and mercy. Every day. Let's then determine to follow His example. Even on the Cross Jesus said, "Father forgive them". What grace! What compassion!

Is it time to let it go? Is it time to forgive?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfRN5dDkymS>

that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be
Give me your strength when all my words are
weakness,
give me your love in spite of all you know.

Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and
disappointments,
give me your trust when all my failings show.

Hymn 423 Forgive our sins

Forgive our sins as we forgive,
you taught us, Lord, to pray,
but you alone can grant us grace
to live the words we say.

How can your pardon reach and
bless

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj91JOq2Xpw>

the unforgiving heart,
that broods on wrongs and will not
let old bitterness depart?

In blazing light your cross reveals
the truth we dimly knew:
what trivial debts are owed to us,

how great our debt to you!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our
souls,
and bid resentment cease;
then, bound to all in bonds of love,
our lives will spread your peace.

Prayers of intercession : Gracious and merciful God, you are the God who forgives us far more than we could ever deserve. You do not count our failures against us, but meet us with mercy and grace. As we remember the servant who was forgiven an unpayable debt, help us to recognise the depth of your forgiveness towards us.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for your Church throughout the world. Where there is division, bring reconciliation. Where there is resentment, bring healing. Where Christians have hurt one another, give us the humility to seek forgiveness and the grace to forgive. Make your Church a community where mercy is not merely spoken about, but lived out. *Lord, in your mercy*

We pray for our communities and for all relationships that have been damaged by anger, betrayal, misunderstanding or hurt. Give courage to those who need to ask for forgiveness, and strength to those who are struggling to offer it. Where reconciliation is possible, open a way forward. Where relationships cannot yet be restored, bring peace and wisdom.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who find forgiveness especially difficult. For those carrying the wounds of abuse, injustice, betrayal or loss, we ask for your tender care. Keep us from offering easy words where deep healing is needed. Give those who have been hurt the support, safety and time they need, and help us to be compassionate companions on their journey.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who hold positions of authority and responsibility: for governments and leaders, for judges and those who work for justice, for those who serve our communities and care for the vulnerable. Give them wisdom and integrity. Where there is injustice, help us not to look away. Where there is conflict, give leaders courage to pursue peace and reconciliation. *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

And we pray for ourselves. Forgive us for the times when we have received your mercy but have been unwilling to show mercy to others. Free us from keeping accounts of other people's failures. Give us generous hearts, ready to forgive as we have been forgiven, and willing to seek reconciliation where we have caused hurt. Help us remember that we stand before you not because we have earned your grace, but because you are merciful. *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Merciful Father, you have forgiven us an immeasurable debt. Teach us to live as people who have received such grace, so that your mercy may flow through us into the lives of others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 443 Come let us sing

Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true,
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came,
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dOSfceRw0U>

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam,
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderers, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful Love,
come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride;
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Blessing : We go in peace, knowing that we are loved, forgiven and held by God. May His compassion guide us, His grace strengthens us, and His peace fill our hearts. And the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Lord of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with us now and for ever more. *Amen*