

13 Sep 2020

Worship Sheet for Sunday 13 September – Freedom and Forgiveness

Matthew 18 takes the issue of forgiveness further. In response to a suggestion that we forgive someone 7 times, Jesus suggests 7 x 70 ie don't bother counting! The parable of the unforgiving official follows.

Call: Into your presence we come, Lord of forgiveness. **Remembering your Son's gift of reconciliation to us.** Into your presence we come, Lord of grace, remind us of your generosity to us. May we respond graciously to you in worship and to one another in loving kindness and gracious forgiveness.

Pray Lord, in our more enlightened moments we will admit that we fail you and one another and are in need of forgiveness though we are often harder on others, setting them higher standards. Draw near to us just now – reassure us of your deep and unfailing love, your generosity of spirit that bears out the sacrifice of your dear Son by being willing to forgive us time and time again, to restore us to fellowship and to participation in your service. Extend that grace to us now that we may be slow to keep a record of wrongs and generous with our forgiveness. As we approach the time when we might once again worship together deepen the bonds of love and grace among us and show us how we may grow together in love. And as we share in the Lord's Prayer may it be more than a thoughtless repetition. Our Father ...

Read Matthew 18: 21-25. How many times should we forgive? Parable of unforgiving official.

Thought There is nothing meany about Jesus' readiness to forgive (and go on forgiving). He is ready to outdo anyone with his grace. We shouldn't mistake that as meaning that our shortcomings don't matter. They are the very reason Jesus went to the cross. However, his abounding grace sheds a light on the way we often fail to act as graciously to others – we are apt to demand retribution, seek to exact sanctions and even hold grudges. (We are not talking about the state's processes for dealing with crime). The passage begins with the disciples putting forward the suggestion that perhaps they should be ready to forgive 7 times, an advance on the law's standard of 4. Not 7 but 77 (or 7 x 70) – we shouldn't quibble about the translation. After all, saying I'm not going to forgive you any more because you have offended me 78 times or 491 times is equally ridiculous. Don't bother counting! That is what Jesus means. Live in the light of the forgiveness you have received. The parable has a chief official of the king being forgiven a debt of 10,000 silver talents. Say £1 million. He then sends a servant to jail for a debt of 100 denarii, say a few pounds. Sensing the profound injustice his friends complain to the king who recalls the debt and sends the official to prison. No, God is not going to recall his forgiveness – that is ours, by grace, in Jesus but it does point to the need for us to live in the light of that grace and treat others as lovingly and generously as we can.

Praise CH4 522 The Church is wherever ... loving, forgiving, vs 1-3.

Pray Heavenly Father, we may take it for granted at times but our position as your children is grounded on relationship – on our relationship primarily with your Son and then with one another as sisters and brothers and beyond that with the community and the world. Help us to let Jesus' grace impact on the way we treat others being generous with our love and service as well as readiness to forgive. Bless all engaged in ongoing care whether to do with covid or not, in hospital, care homes and in the community. Bless those involved in all public facing roles many of which are quite different from 6 months ago. Be with those whose livelihoods have been drastically affected as well as those who fear for their futures. Help us all to adjust to change and its increasing pace. Help us to be mindful of those less able to cope with it. Extend our thinking beyond our immediate circles and help us to embrace the most vulnerable whether here in Scotland or abroad. As governments start to think about how they are going to finance the cost of the coronavirus may they bear in mind the clamant needs of the poor above the preferences of their voters. Bless the church as plans are made to begin face to face worship. Help us to be imaginative as we think beyond the initial response to how we might reach out in mission to young and old alike in this post covid world. Bless all who face the ongoing worries about family and friends, health and relationships. And in our prayer walk we pray for our councillors, MSP's and MP's.

SILENCE

Lord hear our prayers spoken and silent and answer them for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen Blessing May the Lord bless you. Amen.

Sermon, prayers and news (or links to them) will be uploaded to our website www.oldandstandrews.com and the Old and St Andrew's Facebook page. Feel free to copy this and pass it on to Church members or friends who might not use the web or social media

Further links about some streamed services can be found on the Church of Scotland website www.churchofscotland.org.uk

See updates on things like this on Montrose Old and St Andrew's Church Facebook page

The Dial a Reflection phone line is operational. You can phone in for the mini service from Sunday (and as an option too, the sermon) on a landline local number for those who don't have access to the internet. For sermon press 1 on your keypad but only after the tone. Calls charged at local rate and may be free if you have inclusive calls with your phone package.

01674 902624

The material will be changed weekly in time for Sunday mornings

While government regulations now allow for churches to open for communal services, we need to adhere to many requirements including social distancing, hygiene, extra cleaning and disinfecting, removal of hymn books, cushions etc, limited numbers, no singing, masks highly recommended – as well as having procedures in place should someone display symptoms. Notwithstanding changes in advice for those deemed to be at greater risk, many of our congregation still need to be especially careful. The Kirk Session agreed to work on preparing for reopening and a lot of work will have been done over recent weeks. We hope to be able to announce a limited return to Church soon but the congregation will need to appreciate that their experience of Church (as we are allowed) will be different and will need to conform to the rules. It is likely that we will require to have a much shorter and modified service. This will be updates as soon as things become clearer. Additional steps will be taken to try to reach out to those who don't have access to internet or social media but in the meantime please pass on details of the dial a reflection.

Please continue to pray for one another and support where you can and remember all involved in the preparations for reopening when the time is right. Ian