

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield.

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

You will be prompted to join in the responsive portion of the prayer of adoration. God of might and mercy, the heavens and the earth are full of your glory. Your love transforms our lives. You enter our confusion and give insight. You bear our grief and bring healing. You see our fatigue and renew strength. You sense our fear and spark courage. You know death and raise up new life. So we come before you in worship, handing over to you all that weighs us down. Renew us in this time of worship, we pray, so that we may serve you with joy in Jesus' name. Join with me... O God, our lives do not always reflect your transforming power. You are gracious, but we cling to judgment. You are kind, but we can be cruel. You are forgiving, but we nurse grudges and old wounds. Forgive us, O God. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, and make us new through Christ, your Son and our Saviour.

Assurance of Pardon God's amazing love allows each of us to receive his grace and be at peace with God, with yourselves and with each other. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn Follow me, the Master said #645

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

Scripture

Tanakh*	Exodus 14:19-31	[B#61/W#67]
Psalms	Psalms 114	[B#563/W#624]
Epistle	Romans 14:1-12	[B#163/W#170]
Gospel	Matthew 18:21-35	[B#20 /W#20]

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

Message

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

Each week our worship service includes the assurance of pardon. In this we acknowledge our human tendency to fall away from the ways of Christ and the consequence of fracturing our relationship with God. We seek forgiveness and the pardon assures us of God's loving forgiveness and the divine grace offered to each of us. We acknowledge the grace and share in the peace of Christ. The focus of our readings this morning draw our attention to the importance of seeking and offering forgiveness.

Scott Hoezee, in *The Long Haul*, wrote, "Someone once said that the scariest, most sobering word in the entire New Testament is that tiny little word "as." "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." That vital connection between God's abiding forgiveness of us and of our in turn forgiving others tells us that we must forgive. This is not some weird demand on God's part, however. This is not some hoop we must jump through to earn our salvation or to perform like some trained dog just because God enjoys watching us do tricks. No, ... the sheer power of God's forgiveness ... is so great that it simply must and will change us." He continues with "The reason God expects us to forgive as a result of our being forgiven is the same reason you can expect to be wet after diving into a lake: water is wet and when you immerse yourself in it, you get wet. ... When God immerses you in grace and saves your life eternally by it, you will be dripping with grace yourself. You will be full of grace and truth and so spread it to others."

It can be difficult to consider forgiveness and important to recognize that forgiveness is not leniency or acceptance or justification of the harm. It is necessary to recognize and remember the harm done in order to safeguard against it recurring. Forgetting would leave you vulnerable to the offence again. However, "When you hold resentment toward another, you are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that is stronger than steel. Forgiveness is the only way to dissolve that link and get free."¹

The passage from Genesis illustrates the ways in which Joseph's brothers found the forgiveness confusing. It can be difficult to understand why things happen the way they do. The brothers misunderstood his tears. They were afraid of his anger or that he bore a

¹ Catherine Ponder

grudge. He does not. He reaches out with forgiveness and love in hope of reconciliation. Joseph understands his life experiences through the lens of his faith. He believes God's presence led him through the unfolding events in his life.

There is a Buddhist story about a farmer who had a horse run away. Upon hearing the news, his neighbors came to visit. "Such bad luck," they said to the man sympathetically. "Maybe," the farmer replied.

The next morning the horse returned, bringing with it three other wild horses. "How wonderful," the neighbors exclaimed to the farmer. "Maybe," he replied.

The following day, his son tried to ride one of the untamed horses, was thrown, and broke his leg. The neighbors again came to offer their sympathy on his misfortune. "Such bad luck," they said to the farmer. "Maybe," he answered.

The day after the accident, military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army. Seeing that the son's leg was broken, they passed him by. The neighbors congratulated the farmer on how well things had turned out. "What good fortune!" they exclaimed. "Maybe," said the farmer.

This short story reveals that it is not possible for us to know how the wrong doing or the good might play a part as life unfolds. The apostle Paul wrote, "Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known"²

The story of Joseph and his brothers speaks to the issue of how God works. We struggle with the questions that rise up when people choose evil. Where is God in that? You may recall that Joseph's brothers first decided to kill him and, when Reuben objected, they sold him into slavery.

Now, in this passage, his brothers have confessed and as they sought his help. Joseph acknowledged the harm, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good." God is able to take intentional evil and transform it to God's purposes. We struggle with the mystery and the meanings. Not all things are good, but God always works for good.

Gary D. Stratman, in *The Mathematics of Forgiveness*, shared that his mother was a great cook. He developed the wisdom "that a part of the adventure of eating was a few lumps along the way. We want this homogenized, completely smooth dish to be a part of our

² 1 Cor. 13:12

thinking and believing, as well. We want things to go down smoothly, and not everything does. At the heart of the faith, even for believers, there are some lumps. The biggest one for me is Jesus' teaching on forgiveness. In our creed we say, 'we believe in the forgiveness of sins.' Every Sunday, we ask not only for forgiveness of our debts, but we pray that we will forgive our debtors. Do we really believe that? Or is that a lump we disguise in different ways?"

It can be difficult to understand the complexities of the events in our life and our place in the bigger story. The brothers were concerned that Joseph would seek retribution against them, now that their father Jacob was dead. To protect themselves they created a story that Jacob told them to seek forgiveness from Joseph. Were the brothers seeking to repent, to turn away from their hurtful behaviours or were they afraid of being sold into slavery? It can be difficult to seek forgiveness, to be vulnerable and reach out to acknowledge the harm done.

Consider a time when you received forgiveness ... or forgave someone who harmed you. Is there someone you need to forgive or do you need to seek forgiveness? Sara Paddison wrote, "Sincere forgiveness isn't colored with expectations that the other person apologize or change. Don't worry whether or not they totally understand you. Love them and release them. Life feeds back truth to people in its own way and time."

The parable helps us to understand that we suffer when anger drives an inability to forgive. The state of anger keeps our defense systems on high alert. When the high alert continues or flares quickly it becomes harmful. It is vital that a sense of peace and connection with others be re-established. In this parable Jesus taught about the importance of letting go of the anger and seeking to forgive.

There are times when forgiveness seems impossible, especially when someone causes terrible pain, loss, grief, or suffering harm. Lori Wagner wrote, "... the very idea of bestowing forgiveness often can make us feel even more angry. How dare someone even suggest that we forgive this terrible person! How can someone suggest that we merely forgive someone who has perhaps caused us a lifetime in therapy or a deeply seated grief or loss? How can anyone expect us to show grace to someone who has harmed us or someone we love? Indignantly, we harbor even more resentment, we keep fueling our anger, we resolve never to let this go. ... Why would we want to do that, we say." Wagner continues with, "The simple answer is this: Because anger and resentment are like an

Prayers of the People

God, we come before you thankful that you provide the opportunity to return to you when we wander away. We give you thanks for the encouragement and support we receive from friends in Christ, here in our church and wherever we meet them.

We thank you for relationships that have grown stronger through the courage of forgiveness.

We pray for those among us and around us who are struggling to live wisely and seek a way forward. We pray for those who confront their addictions and try to change habits that are harmful. We pray your Spirit will guide their persistent search for better health. We pray for all who seek an end to violence and anger. May your Spirit assist their courage to walk a new way. God of changed hearts, renew the future for us all.

We pray for those who have broken laws and seek to make amends: may they develop good judgement in action and relationships.

We pray for those who have betrayed trust as they seek to rebuild integrity. May your Spirit guide them to take responsibility.

Spirit of transforming power, work in us and in all for whom we pray. O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you have taken up the cross and know by heart all that causes suffering and pain. We pray today for all those in need of healing and comfort, whatever the source of their pain.

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. Equip us to offer support for those who are near to us. O God of the lonely and sorrowing, in Christ you experienced the loss we know when loved ones die and the pain of betrayal by friends. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges: Jim T; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Warren and Lori; and, Don, Phyllis, and Shawn. We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

O God of hope and new possibility, in Christ you opened the way into the future for us through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage we need to face our future, assured of your presence and power to sustain us. We offer all that we are and all that we hope for through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together as his people:

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Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn God is love, come heaven adoring #314

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Jesus set the challenge to forgive seventy times seven. Allow forgiveness to shape and change your life.

May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and communion in the Holy Spirit bless you now and evermore.

Postlude Amen