

Ardoch Parish Church

Sunday 13th September 2020

As always welcome to our worship today when the question is "How often should I forgive?"



Our first hymn is Blessed be Your Name

Blessed be Your name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your name

Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in Lord still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be Your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name When the sun's shining down
on me

When the world's all as it should be

Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name

On the road marked with suffering

Though there's pain in the offering

Blessed be Your name

You give and take away

You give and take away

My heart will choose to say

Lord blessed be Your name

Sung by Matt Redman

Mairi leads us in prayer

Let us pray

Ever-living God, Creator and Sustainer of all that
we perceive,
guide us always towards peace, hope, and the
promise of a new way of life in your church,
a community united in love of you and each other.

As we move through the seasons of the year,
as we wait for the landscape to change,
we are shown the beauty of our world.

We give thanks, and we pray
for the wisdom to listen to experts,
to see the impact we have on your

awesome creation, that we might
unify and makes changes now,
for the generations to come.

As our world continues to grapple with the
unimaginable loss and pain experienced
by hundreds of thousands of families,
we pray, individually and as a church
for compassion and the ability
to comfort, support,
and to have patience and empathy in the
grief of others no matter how it
is manifest or how long it lasts.

As our church seeks its own way forward
in a changed and changing world,
we pray for strength
to build on what is good,
to prune what is dead,
and to find new ways to
unite in our mission to
spread your love to the world around us.

As inequality, fear, and hate
continue to plague our society,
we pray for the boldness
to stand up to the evils of this world,
to live the new life promised and
given through our saviour Jesus,
to turn from inaction to action,
and to work for justice for all
as one body of Christ,
in the full knowledge and confidence
that you are with us now and forever.
Amen.

Let us say together 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

Irene Robertson reads from Matthew Chapter 18 v 21–35

The hymn introduced by Irene is Charles Wesley's well known hymn, "And can it be"

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
for me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
let angel minds enquire no more.

He left his Father's throne above -
so free, so infinite his grace -
emptied himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
for, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray -
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
alive in him, my living head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach the eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Mairi leads us in her reflection on Forgiveness

“How often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”

Jesus answered Peter, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”

When we were in primary school we were taught that verbs are doing words. Forgiveness is very much a verb, forgiveness requires actions

Forgiveness, for Jesus, is not something to be measured. It is a quality; a way of being, a way of

living, a way of loving, a way of relating, a way of thinking and seeing.

When we look at it like that it is nothing less than the way of Christ. So if we are to follow Christ then it must become our way as well. "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

Does that mean the murderer? The cheating partner? The underhand businessman? The racist? . The rapist? The bully? . The abuser? the terrorist?.... Yes, yes it does

I would imagine every one hearing this today would be in favour of forgiveness, at least they would be in principle and I think that C S Lewis sums it up very well for us in his book Mere Christianity page 115 when he writes "Every one, says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until there is something to forgive" How very true indeed because the act of forgiveness can be a long , difficult and painful road to travel.

So what is it that we do ? What do we do when there is something to forgive?

Some people will look for revenge. Some will just turn and run away from life and relationships. Some will let the pain destroy them. I don't say that out of criticism or judgment because I know how hard forgiveness can be. We all struggle with it and we often avoid it. I know because I have been there but I am also fully aware that none of those answers are the way of Christ. All of these ways will

simply leave us stuck in the past, tied to the evil of another, and empty and distant from the future that God wants to give us.

Forgiveness is the only way forward.

That does not mean we forget, condone, or approve of what was done.

It does not mean we ignore or excuse cruelty or injustice.

What it does mean is that we are released from them. We let go of the thoughts that cause us pain and lock us in the past. We look to the future rather than the past. We try to see and love as God sees and loves. Forgiveness is a way in which we bring our life in line with God's life. Ultimately if we do not forgive what we are doing is putting ourselves in the place of God, the ultimate judge to whom all are accountable (Ro. 14:10, 12).

This should not be news to us. We know it well. We acknowledge and pray it every Sunday and I'll bet most of you pray it everyday. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." We pray those words so easily, but do we live out our prayer? Do our actions support our request? "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times."

When we forgive we create space for new life. Forgiveness is an act of hopefulness and resurrection for the one who forgives. It is the healing process for our damaged soul and life.

When we forgive we no longer stand in the darkness we allow the light to break through. Forgiveness releases us from the evil power of another. When we forgive we refuse to let our future be determined by the past. When we forgive we let go of the thoughts, the hatred, the fear that fill us and we begin to live and love again.

There is no easy road to forgiveness, no gentle paths, no short cuts. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. It is something we must practice every day. It begins with recognition and thanksgiving that we ourselves have been forgiven by the cross of Christ. Hanging between two thieves he prayed, "Father, forgive them" (Lk. 23:34). Those are the anguished words of infinite forgiveness, and it must be our cry also in our own lives, in our families, our work places, our parishes, our day to day life.

Forgiveness has never begun in us. Forgiveness begins with God. That's what the slave in our gospel reading today who refused to forgive didn't understand.

It was not about him.

It's about God.

We do not choose to forgive. We only choose to share the forgiveness we have already received from the cross.

Amen

Our closing hymn is “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

Words & Music by Fanny Jane Crosby & Phoebe Palmer Knapp Public
Domain

Benediction

**Now go in peace with forgiveness in your
heart. In the name of the Father, Son and the
Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Intimations

Autumn Link - Gordon Roy has kindly offered to edit and
produce the Autumn Link.

30th September is the deadline for submitting articles,

reports etc

Please send all material directly to Gordon at,
gordon.roy@outlook.com

The Ardoch Session Meeting is to be held Wednesday 23rd
September at 7pm

The Zoom link will be issued nearer that date.

Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139
ardochparishchurch.org

