



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 13th September 2026

Compiled by Rev. Melvyn Cooke

Call to Worship Psalm 136:1-3

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods,

for his steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords,

for his steadfast love endures forever.

Hymn 50 StF

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise,

The city of our God, the holy place,

The joy of the whole earth.

Great is the Lord in whom we have the victory,

He aids us against the enemy,

We bow down on our knees.

And, Lord we want to lift your name on high,

And Lord, we want to thank you,

For the works you've done in our lives;

and Lord, we trust in your unfailing love,

for you alone are God eternal,

throughout the earth and heaven above.

Steve McEwan

Hymn 47 StF

Faithful God, faithful God,

All sufficient One, I worship you.

Shalom my peace, my strong Deliverer,

I lift you up, faithful God.

Christopher Alan Bowater (b. 1947)

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I desire to learn how to worship You as You deserve. Help me Lord, to grow into the sort of worshipper that You are seeking, one who worships You in spirit and truth.

I pray that my life may be one that honours You in all I say and all I do, in all the circumstances of life, throughout the day and as I drift into sleep at night.

Lord, I pray that I may learn to walk in all of Your ways, to serve with all of my being and to learn to love You as You have loved me. Teach me Lord, how to worship You in the beauty of holiness so that I may be one that bows my heart before You in spirit and truth, to Your honour and glory. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Reading 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, canceled 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 canceled 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 628

Faithful one, so unchanging,
Ageless one, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you, again and again.
I call out to you, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble.
you lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the anchor,
My hope is in You alone.

Brian Doerksen (b.1965)

Reflection

There is a phrase that over the years I have heard too frequently, when if we take the words of Jesus seriously, we should never hear, and that phrase is; "I will never forgive him/her", or the many versions such as "I don't know why they should ever be forgiven", or as I often heard when working as a prison chaplain, "we should just lock them up and throw away the keys!"

Now I would be at the front of the queue to acknowledge that some crimes are unpalatable to humanity, or that things that people do to us, particularly those whom we trust and love, can hurt to the very core of our existence. Most commonly of all it is not what someone does, but what someone says that hurts the most.

I do not believe that Jesus was saying in Matthew 18 that we should ignore our hurts, neither was he implying that it is easy just to eradicate them from our memories. After all we have all heard the saying

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me”, and while we would love that to be true, the reality is that we are vulnerable to hurts whether they come by words or deeds, and often they strike deep into the very heart of our being and impact us far beyond the moment of hurt, and into our future.

The truth of the matter is that the words of Jesus were not only shocking when spoken to Peter, but they were revolutionary, they call us to reconcile redemption, renewal and transformation, that is not humanly possible, but by and through God’s grace can be experienced, and lived out. Is it true that the words and actions of others either intentionally or unintentionally hurt us deeply, YES! Yet in the words, command of Jesus there is a painful challenge that call us to respond not by human intent, but through God’s grace.

The number 7 in Scripture stands perfection, completeness, without blemish, for example God created the world and all that was in 7 days, and Genesis reminds us that “God saw that it was good” the same word for perfection, completeness. The question that Peter poses to Jesus, is how many times should I forgive my brother or sister, **up to seven times**? Almost as if there were a point at which forgiveness could be overridden and revenge extracted., if not revenge then at least a justification for broken relationships. I suspect you can recall that Jewish philosophy was based on an ‘eye for an eye’. Did Peter anticipate Jesus to respond by saying up to seven times you should be controlled, but at the eighth time, you might be allowed a little revenge? Jesus shocked not only Peter but all who were listening by saying not just seven times, but seventy seven times, or as many translations recount seven times seventy, in other words perfection multiplied by perfection, completeness times completeness. Just as there is no limit to God’s grace and forgiveness to me, I am expected to show the same grace and forgiveness to others.

Will this response stop the pain, probably not, but as Dr Robert Schuller once said,” when you exercise forgiveness you allow God’s Spirit to turn your scars into stars of His grace”. Your pain may run deep, but God’s healing power will always run deeper.

Prayers

God of forgiveness,
I come before your throne of grace,
Remembering how much you forgave me at the cross,
And the high price you paid.
Thank you that you don’t treat me as my sins deserve,
And that although I was once stained with sin,
You have washed me white as snow.

God of mercy,
As you have forgiven me, help me to forgive.
I want to live with an open heart:
Unoffended,
Free from bitterness,
And flowing with grace.
Where I have been wronged,
I trust you to make things right.
Where I am in pain,
I ask you to bring healing.

Holy Spirit,
Please melt my heart of stone, And give me a heart of flesh.
Give me the strength to forgive without holding back,
And help me to show the same mercy I've received from you.
I want to see others how you see them –
Made in your image, And worthy of your love.
As I forgive those who have hurt me,
I choose to let go of anger and resentment, And with a thankful heart,
I walk into freedom. Amen

We say together the **Lord's Prayer** in the version, and language you are most comfortable using.

Hymn 67 StF

1] This, this is the God we adore,
our faithful, unchangeable friend,
whose love is as great as his power,
and neither knows measure nor end:

2] 'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
we'll praise him for all that is past,
and trust him for all that's to come.

Joseph Hart (1712-1767)

Blessing

May the warmth of Christ heal you,
The eyes of Christ gaze on you,
And the peace of Christ shine through you
Today and evermore.