

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity - 13th Sept 2020

Collect:

Merciful God, your Son came to save us and bore our sins on the cross: may we trust in your mercy and know your love, rejoicing in the righteousness that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm 114

- 1 When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
- 2 Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion.
- 3 The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back.
- 4 The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.
- 5 Why is it, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back?



- 6 O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs?
- 7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,
- 8 who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.

A reading from the letter to the Romans (14.1-12)

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,

and every tongue shall give praise to God."

So then, each of us will be accountable to God. *This is the word of the Lord.*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew (18.21-35)

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay

you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection:

Forgiveness isn't easy. When I was little, I remember having gotten into a fight with my brother, and after parental intervention we'd been told to apologise and forgive each other. But when it came to my turn to say 'I forgive you', I really didn't want to do it! Because I knew that as soon as those words had come out of my mouth, I wouldn't then be able to get my own back. My brother would have got away with it, without my being able to exercise my childish sense of justice. Forgiveness didn't seem fair. When Peter asks Jesus if seven times is enough to forgive someone, he must have been imagining that there definitely was a number. There must come a point when there has been enough forgiving, and instead justice and retaliation can be served. Seven? That's generous, right? Maybe a few more times? But no. Jesus' response of seventy-seven (or seventy times seven in some translations) is outlandish. It implies that forgiveness should never reach a limit. No matter what someone has done, or how many times they have offended us, we should forgive.

That is incredibly hard for us to really take on board. As human beings we are quite fragile, and throughout our lives, even living in comfortable, peaceful situations, we will be hurt and upset numerous times by numerous people. And like Peter, perhaps we wish that there was a reasonable upper limit, that eventually it would be justifiable to say 'no more, time for payback'. But for God, for Jesus, there is no limit. This is even something that makes us angry at times. For example, on Friday it was 19 years since 9/11. What about forgiveness there? Or what about forgiveness of a hit and run driver? Of family members who haven't spoken in years? Or forgiveness of people who voted the opposite way to us on Brexit? Forgiveness of poor government, of selfishness, of cruelty? Is there nothing where we can say 'enough, we don't have to forgive this one'? Well... no.

To forgive does not come easily, quickly or simply. Sometimes it doesn't come at all. But Jesus teaches us that forgiveness is always the right path. It doesn't mean that there are no consequences (justice is a key attribute of God), but it means being able to let go of that desire to 'get our own back'.

I think it's important to remember that we are all different from each other, in the way we think, the way we relate to others, the things in church or faith that we hold as precious. In his letter to the Romans Paul is explaining this - that instead of being hurt or angry that someone doesn't do things the way we do, or that they have different values, all we must do is give thanks to God, and love one another. At the end of the day, we will all hurt and be hurt as we go through life. But we are all also loved and forgiven by God, and this is what we should echo in our words and actions with each other. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for our own forgiveness as well as for others, that God would 'forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us', because there is an interconnectedness between us all. Our own relationship with God isn't just in a bubble, but it has a ripple effect on our relationships with the people around us. We are forgiven fully, so we too must forgive. And in the moments when we struggle, we can still pray for God to forgive the other person and ourselves. When Peter asks his question, he was probably hoping for an easy answer. For Jesus wasn't in the business of easy answers. Forgive, Jesus says, forgive, and keep on forgiving forever. Because that's what God does, pouring down mercy like rivers, on each one of us.

Amen.

- Rev Cat

***God is love. Those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.***

Here are the words of two hymns you may like to sing or pray this week:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
to keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
of this world in the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son and Spirit blest,
who reign in highest heaven
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Call this number ↓ **for free**, to listen to hymns being sung, prayers, or reflections. Give it a go, it's a lovely way to worship from home!



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers



Our services back in Church combined with ZOOM at 10am are working well. **In order to attend church on Sundays, you need to book in, ideally with the electronic booking form, or by phoning 01473 742973** (the Church answer phone) by Saturday 9 am.

To attend the Wednesday 10am Holy Communion service, you can just come along. We look forward to seeing you soon.

St Thomas Church is open for Private Prayer, on Mondays and Thursdays, between 11 am and 2 pm. The Peace Garden is open for use every weekday.

Notices:

Our **prayer lists** are being refreshed. Unless you ask in the next week for a person to remain on the prayer list, all names will be removed. Let Rev Cat or Rev Jutta know if you would like a name to remain listed below.

!! Electoral Roll: please have all electoral roll forms back to Alison by next Sunday (20th) at the latest!

Youth Group is starting again, online, today - 13th September! For school year 7+, we meet from 6pm-7.30pm, every other week until the 6th December. We will be joined by Andy Jefferson (Inspiring Ipswich Pioneer) who is going to support leading the group. We look forward to seeing our young people online!

We pray for Malcolm, to be licenced as an Evangelist on the 27 September at 6pm at the Cathedral.

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Sophie, Adam, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Frank D., Andrew Derrett, Peggy, Pat, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Julie, Samantha, Rex, Molly Johansen, Margaret Christian, Marion (Val's sister-in-law)

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily, Juliet Adams, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Jean Dominy, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie (cancer), Peter, Jim, Richard (June's nephew), Sylvia Eley, Dougie, Robert, Andy, Alice (Joan's grandson's wife), Beryl Field, Vincent Lightbody, Colin Wells

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved. For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refugees* across the world & diplomates and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: Gwen Strike (Phyllis' sister), Carl Leonard R.I.P

Sunday Worship Video & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/sthomasipswich/>

Sunday 13th September—Trinity 14
10 am: Eucharist & ZOOM Worship & chat

Tuesday 15th September
7.30pm Meditation Group livestream on Facebook/StThomasPilgrimCommunity

Wednesday, 16th September, 10am
Eucharist in Church with livestream on Facebook/StThomasIpswich

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation
(each week we will include a dozen names)

Naomi & Dan, with Millie, Lily-Rose, Archie & Dylan, Gerald & Jenny, Peggy, Carol Brown, Aaron & Lyanne, Keith Brisland, June Browes, Mary Bullass



Birthdays this week:

David Pitt (15th), Robyn (16th),

Alison Gibbs & Rev Lis Arnold (19th)

Church website:

<http://sthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Please note: Our website is down due to problems with the server. Please go to [facebook/stthomasipswich](https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich) for any updates

Contacts:

Priest in charge: Revd Jutta Brueck
m: 07958 360564

Email: jutta.brueck@cofesuffolk.org

Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

Assistant Curate: Revd Cat Connolly
m: 07530 412988

Email: revcatconnolly@gmail.com

Cat's day off: Mondays

YOUR SUPPORT NEEDED FOR NWIPSWICH FOODBANK organised by the Big Local Trust:

Please drop non-perishable food at
Castlehill Community Centre, Highfield Road
on **MONDAYS** between 9.30 and 11.00am.

**If you would like to chat,
please do give us a ring:**

← Revd Jutta or Rev Cat

Roger Elmer 07810 274586

Gloria Elmer 745590

Sylvia Dickerson 07903 739487

Malcolm Gibbs 07906 663530

Mary Bullass 625135

Rev Jackie 07962 172639

Revd Pat 464748