

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Stockbridge, Massachusetts
September 13, 2020 – The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

Forgiveness

In this week's gospel reading ([Matthew 18:21-35](#)) Jesus continues the conversation with the disciples about relationships within the body of Christ. Here he discusses forgiveness, perhaps the most difficult part of human interaction. And Jesus makes it clear that we must always and continually forgive, no matter how often we are called to do so.

And yet, the parable of the unforgiving servant that follows seems to suggest that there are limits to God's forgiveness. Are we called to be more forgiving than God? I think the point is that forgiveness must engender forgiveness. The forgiven must forgive others.

Of course, this is what we pray regularly in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, and we forgive those who trespass against us." This is the best way to live: Knowing we are flawed creatures, we hope and count on the grace of God's forgiveness; and being forgiven, we extend a similar grace to one another.

Welcome to St. Paul's, where we strive to give and receive God's grace.

Music		Doug Schmolze, guitar
Prelude:		JS Bach
After Sermon:	Gallardas	Gaspar Sanz
Offertory:	Adagio	Tommaso Albioni
After Communion:	Bourree	Anonymous
Postlude:	Courante	JS Bach

Collect

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Readings

Exodus 14:19-31

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites

went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Psalm 114

- 1 Hallelujah! When Israel came out of Egypt, *
the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,
- 2 Judah became God's sanctuary *
and Israel his dominion.
- 3 The sea beheld it and fled; *
Jordan turned and went back.
- 4 The mountains skipped like rams, *
and the little hills like young sheep.
- 5 What ailed you, O sea, that you fled? *
O Jordan, that you turned back?
- 6 You mountains, that you skipped like rams? *
you little hills like young sheep?
- 7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, *
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
- 8 Who turned the hard rock into a pool of water *
and flint-stone into a flowing spring.

Matthew 18: 21-35

Peter came and said to Jesus, "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."

The Third Song of Isaiah *Isaiah 60:1-3, 11a, 14c, 18-19*

Arise, shine, for your light has come, *
and the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.
For behold, darkness covers the land; *
deep gloom enshrouds the peoples.
But over you the Lord will rise, *
and his glory will appear upon you.
Nations will stream to your light, *
and kings to the brightness of your dawning.
Your gates will always be open; *
by day or night they will never be shut.
They will call you, The City of the Lord, *
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
Violence will no more be heard in your land, *
ruin or destruction within your borders.
You will call your walls, Salvation, *
and all your portals, Praise.
The sun will no more be your light by day; *
by night you will not need the brightness of the moon.
The Lord will be your everlasting light, *
and your God will be your glory.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Our Next Adult Study

Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven

Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm, on Zoom – beginning September 29

Dr. Amy Jill Levine, Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University, has built her career on helping Christians understand the Jewish context of Jesus' life and ministry. Her newest book, *Sermon on the Mount*, is a readable and thought-provoking look at these fundamental teachings from Matthew's gospel. Father Sam will use this book (available in paperback or for the Kindle) as the guide to our six-week study, in partnership with the folks of Grace Church of Great Barrington and Christ Trinity Church of Sheffield. Beginning September 29, we will gather on the Zoom platform on Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm. Questions? Ask Father Sam.

Worship Teams (If you exchange shifts with someone, please notify the Church Office by Thursday morning at stpaulsstockbridge@gmail.com.)

Today, September 13

Celebrant
& Preacher: The Rev. Sam Smith

Ushers: Duncan Pollack
Don Temples

Reader: Carl Sprague

Next Sunday, September 20

Celebrant
& Preacher: The Rev. Jane Tillman

Ushers: Deb Pege
Matt Fillio

Reader: Diane Dillon

Parish Prayer List

- People we pray for on Sundays: **Cecilia, Thelma, Donnice, Paris, Joan Ann, Sue**
- Long-term prayer list: **Piers, Katrina, Khali, George, Jeff, David, Doug, Barbara, ZsuZsa, Charles, Tom, Rich, Ronnie, John, George, Christy, Michael, Karen**
- Prayers of thanksgiving that **Kendra MacLeod** is now a US citizen.
- Our partners at Grace Church, Great Barrington and their priest Libby; Christ Trinity Episcopal-Lutheran, Sheffield and their priest Erik; the Austen Riggs community and the Riverbrook Residence; victims of violence, abuse, persecution and disaster at home and abroad; those impacted by the pandemic
- Outreach Ministries of the Week: **St. Paul's Children's Center**
- Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: **St. Peter's, Springfield**
- Anglican Cycle of Prayer: **Anglican Church of South America**
- Birthdays: **Ryleigh Fillio** (15th)