

And out of pity for him,
the lord of that slave
released him and
forgave him
the debt.



Matthew 18:27, NRSV

Sunday, September 13, 2020
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

CALL TO WORSHIP

I lift my eyes to the mountains,
From where does my help come?
 My help comes from the Lord,
 The maker of heaven and earth.
We look not to the mountains or valleys,
Even heaven or earth.
 For God is found among us.
Wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name,
 God is here among us.
Come, let us worship the God of Creation,
The God of People, the God of Community.
 Let us follow Jesus, for Jesus is the Way.
 Let us worship together in faith.

GATHERING SONG

GREETING

During this time, the presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The presiding minister leads the prayer of the day.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Exodus 14:19-31

The reading may be announced:

A reading from Exodus.

Having decided to let the Israelites go from Egypt, Pharaoh had second thoughts and sent his army after them (14:5-8). Though the passage through the Red Sea became a sign of salvation for the people of Israel, Pharaoh's forces drowned in the waters. As a result the Israelites believed in the Lord and in the Lord's servant Moses.

19The 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. 20It 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.

21Then 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. 22The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. 23The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. 24At 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. 25He 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."

26Then 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." 27So 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. 28The 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. 29But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

30Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31Israel 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.

The reading may be concluded:

The word of the Lord.

The assembly responds:

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 114

1Hallelujah! When Israel came | out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people | of strange speech,
2Judah became God's | sanctuary

and Israel | God's dominion.
3The sea beheld | it and fled;
Jordan turned | and went back.
4The mountains | skipped like rams,
and the little hills | like young sheep.
5What ailed you, O sea, | that you fled,
O Jordan, that | you turned back,
6you mountains, that you | skipped like rams,
you little hills | like young sheep?
7Tremble, O earth, at the presence | of the Lord,
at the presence of the | God of Jacob,
8who turned the hard rock into a | pool of water
and flint-stone into a | flowing spring.

SECOND READING: Romans 14:1-12

The reading may be announced:

A reading from Romans.

This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.

1Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.
2Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. 3Those 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. 4Who 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.

5Some 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. 6Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

7We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8If 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. 9For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

10Why 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. 11For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

12So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

The reading may be concluded:
The word of the Lord.

The assembly responds:
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35

The gospel is announced.
The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

21Peter 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?” 22Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

23“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; 25and, 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. 26So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 28But 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.’ 29Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 31When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ 34And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. 35So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

The gospel concludes:
The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

The assembly is seated.

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Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

HYMN OF THE DAY

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

You welcome us when we are weak in faith. Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Strengthen faith through Bible studies and Sunday schools, confirmation classes and youth ministries. Nurture new ministries of education and growth. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

The heights of the heavens show us the vastness of your steadfast love. Have compassion on your creation. Where human selfishness has brought ruin and destruction, we look to you to heal, renew, and redeem your world. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Bring healing and justice wherever harm is dealt. Provide vindication for all who are oppressed. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor; deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger, and guard refugees fleeing famine, poverty, and war. Bless all who are ill and are in need of your healing presence (especially Katana, Connor, Fritz, Neil, Maria, Ralph, Beryl, Rose Marie, Nya, Muriel, Karen, Ron, Brian, and Kolby). Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Teach us to forgive. Remind us that you do not always accuse us. Still our tongues when we are tempted to pass judgment and argue over opinions. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise you. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. Fill us with good things at your table, that we may come to the help of all in need, through Jesus Christ, our redeemer and Lord.

Amen.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

The presiding minister continues, using one of the following or another appropriate form.

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

The presiding minister may introduce the Lord's Prayer.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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 trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

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

COMMUNION

The body of Christ, given for you.

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

Gracious God, in this meal you have drawn us to your heart, and nourished us at your table with food and drink, the body and blood of Christ. Now send us forth to be your people in the world, and to proclaim your truth this day and evermore, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

BLESSING

The presiding minister proclaims God's blessing.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

**** PLEASE REMEMBER ****

TO BOOK IN ADVANCE FOR "LIMITED" SUNDAY WORSHIP

By calling the office (519-271-8527) Monday to Thursday 8:00 am to 1:30 pm and Friday 8:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Below is a recorded announcement from Pastor Jeff regarding the reopening of our building for worship commencing on **Sunday, September 6, 2020**. This recording, together with an article published in the September Newsletter, spells out some of the steps mentioned.

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!Alrwdlq5YZa1gxRWsxwZaYytwrg>

PLEASE CONTINUE TO CHECK OUR WEBSITE AT
www.zionstratford.com

For the above-mentioned video and Updates

INSTRUMENTALISTS / SOLOISTS NEEDED



As we slowly begin to see a glimmer of hope that this COVID crisis may soon be coming to an end, it is clear that singing, one of the most basic activities we have used for centuries to celebrate our faith, may still not be allowed for many months to come. The very early stages of returning to gathering at Zion will begin in September with appropriate social distancing. Music will still be

a part of this new beginning as we are fortunate to have our regular accompanists, Sandra Mogensen and Marco Burak and I certainly hope to contribute as often as needed.



In this new Amber phase in September we will be allowed to include solo singers and instrumentalists in our services. I am putting out the call to anyone who may be willing to contribute their talents in these areas to bring some joy and healing to our regular 10:00 a.m. services. If you are nervous, please don't be as I will work with you until you are comfortable.

I will also occasionally be bringing in other local musicians who may not be members of our congregation. Please leave your contact information with Jane in the church office if you feel that you could participate in our services in this way. I look forward to hearing from you,

Minister of Music — Paul Shilton

HELP WANTED

A Sunday School teacher is required for our younger children when Sunday School resumes.

The class will consist of children from 3 years old, JK, SK, Grades 1 and 2.

If you are interested or would like more information,

***please contact Paula McNaughton
at 519-273-2174.***

ETERNITY FOR TODAY

The list of subscribers to “Eternity For Today” has been misplaced. If you subscribe, or wish to subscribe, could you please call Jane in the office at 519-271-8527 in order for us to make up a new list. Office hours are Monday to Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Thank you!





**THANK YOU
FOR COMING**

WE HAVE MISSED YOU !