

September 13, 2020
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 19
St. Mary's-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church
Ramona, CA

Prelude: Bruce Springsteen's, "My City of Ruins,"
Sung and played by Joshua Charney for the anniversary of 9/11

There is a blood red circle
On the cold dark ground
And the rain is falling down
The church door's thrown open
I can hear the organ's song
But the congregation's gone
My city of ruins
My city of ruins

Now the sweet bells of mercy
Drift through the evening trees
Young men on the corner
Like scattered leaves
The boarded up windows
The empty streets
While my brother's down on his knees
My city of ruins
My city of ruins

Come on, rise up! Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up! Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up! Come on, rise up

Now's there's tears on the pillow
Darlin' where we slept
And you took my heart when you left
Without your sweet kiss
My soul is lost, my friend
Tell me how do I begin again?
My city's in ruins
My city's in ruins

Now with these hands
With these hands
With these hands
I pray Lord
With these hands

With these hands
I pray for the strength, Lord
With these hands
With these hands
I pray for the faith, Lord
We pray for your love, Lord
We pray for the lost, Lord
We pray for this world, Lord
We pray for the strength, Lord
We pray for the strength, Lord

Come on
Come on
Come on, rise up
Come on, rise up

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
People And Blessed be God's kingdom now and forever. Amen.

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.*

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One.
Have Mercy on us.

The Celebrant then says
The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Let us pray.

Collect
Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament, Pete Casalegno, lector

Genesis 50:15-21

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's People
Thanks be to God

Psalm 103:(1-7), 8-13

Benedic, anima mea

- 1 [Bless the LORD, O my soul, *
and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.
- 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, *
and forget not all his benefits.
- 3 He forgives all your sins *
and heals all your infirmities;
- 4 He redeems your life from the grave *
and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness;
- 5 He satisfies you with good things, *
and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
- 6 The LORD executes righteousness *
and judgment for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made his ways known to Moses *
and his works to the children of Israel.]
- 8 The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.

- 9 He will not always accuse us, *
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he removed our sins from us.
- 13 As a father cares for his children, *
so does the LORD care for those who fear him

The Epistle: Lector, Carol Weissenberger

Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling 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 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.

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.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew
Glory to you, Lord Christ

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 Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Christ

Sermon:

15 Pentecost, Cycle A proper 19, September 13, 2020
Genesis 50:15-21 Psalm 103:8-13
Romans 14:1-12 Matthew 18:21-35

The Psalmist proclaimed that "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."
If the nature of God is compassion and mercy, and we are made in the image of God, how should we act? We too should be people of compassion and mercy.
And what is the word which expresses mercy the best? Forgiveness.

What if we asked God, God how many times do you have to forgive me? Seven times? And what does the Psalmist say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far God has removed our sins from us." That sound like more than seven times. It sound like more than seventy-seven times.

Why does God forgive? Because compassion and mercy is the divine nature.

When Jesus began his ministry, he found many people who believed that they were unforgiven people. Many people felt alienated from God because the role of the religious leaders had become to make sure that lots of people knew that they were not forgiven. Many people did not know that God is compassionate and full of mercy because the gatekeepers were counting sins, rather than declaring forgiveness. The role of religion was to count the number of sins of the people while requiring so many religious hoops to jump through to qualify for God's forgiveness,

Peter, a disciple was aware of the counting sins game in religious circles so he asked Jesus about the limits of forgiveness. "Jesus, how many time do I have to forgive my brother? Seven times." Jesus answered, "Seventy-seven times." And then Jesus told a financial parable about two lenders and two borrowers. One man borrowed a lot and couldn't repay the debt on time and he begged for forgiveness and received total forgiveness of his large debt. This same man who received the forgiveness of his debt went to someone who owed him a small amount and he demanded that this man pay. And when he couldn't he had him punished. The story was told to the big lender the King, and he was furious at the man who happy to receive forgiveness for his great debt but was unwilling to practice forgiveness to the debtor who owed him but a little?

A central teaching of Jesus about forgiveness is what I call the reciprocity of forgiveness. In the Lord's Prayer, in Matthew and Luke, we are taught to pray, "Forgive us our sins, debts, trespasses, as we forgive our debtors, and those who sin and trespass against us. Receiving forgiveness for ourselves is tied to our willingness to practice forgiveness. That is the reciprocity of forgiveness and this a central teaching of Jesus. Jesus often coupled the healing of people with the declaration of their sins forgiven. Lots of sickness involves people living in the state of mind of guilt and not knowing forgiveness. Forgiven is central to both physical and spiritual health.

If we want to be like God, be like Christ, we need to learn the practice of forgiving and being forgiven.

What does forgiveness mean in a practical sense? It means that God is always giving us time to become better. We not perfect beings. We fall short of God's expectations and our own expectation and the expectations of other people. And what does forgiveness mean? It means that God allows us to tolerate ourselves and each others in this process of repentance. If God demanded that we be perfect finished people all at once, we would be doomed. God as a compassionate and merciful parent gives us more time as we together forgive each other and learn how to be more compassionate and merciful people.

We are mistaken, if we think that God's mercy is carte blanche forgiveness to do whatever we want because we know that God will forgive us.

The forgiveness is operative under the condition of always amending our lives toward being better.

Let us today be thankful that God is compassionate and merciful and forgives us. But let us know that the full activation of forgiveness only occurs when we too, receive God's mercy and compassion to forgive others.

And forgiveness is not always easy, which is why we need to receive it as God's gift even as we as a community try to heal in the mutual hurts and harms that we often inflict on each other.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we pray with new fervor, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Amen.

The Nicene Creed (page 357)

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People: led by Pete and Jill Casalegno

Collect for Holy Cross Day, September 14
Prayer for Commemorating 9/11

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross that he might draw the whole world to himself: Mercifully grant that we, who glory in the mystery of our redemption, may have grace to take up our cross and follow him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

As we know that the death of Jesus turned out to be a redemptive event, so to we ask for redemption as we remember 9/11, as we live within the pandemic, the wildfires and the civil unrest.

In the midst of suffering, we offer our thanksgiving for the heroic first responders. We ask for mercies and protection for the firefighters and all who support them. We ask for safety, grace and protection for all hospital workers and care-givers.

Gracious God, we did not ask to have heroes. We did not want the conditions which has required them. But in the midst of our calamities, we have been blessed to see so many sacrificial heroes who have arisen to do their jobs in the most challenging conditions, and they do it for us. They have given themselves to the greater love, of laying down their lives for their friends. We are grateful for their heroic service, even as we ask that their service will not be needed with the successful abatement of our great plagues. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the hero of our faith. Amen.

Let us confess our sins against God and our Neighbor

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;

that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins
through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all
goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in
eternal life. Amen.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.
People: And also with you

Hymn: # 674 Forgive our Sins as We Forgive

Played and sung by Joshua Charney
Forgive our sins as we forgive
You taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace
To live the words we say.

How can your pardon reach and bless
The unforgiving heart
That broods on wrongs and will not let
Old bitterness depart?

In blazing light your cross reveals
The truth we dimly knew:
What trivial debts are owed to us;
How great our debt to you!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls
And bid resentment cease;
Then, bound to all in bonds of love
Our lives will spread your peace.

Doxology: Sung by Rob and Deb Lewallen
Eucharistic Prayer B

The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People We lift them to the Lord.

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every- where to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who on the first day of the week overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Celebrant and People

Sung and played by Joshua Charney

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

Celebrant and People

We remember his death,

We proclaim his resurrection,

We await his coming in glory;

The Celebrant continues

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with the ever blessed Virgin Mary, and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. *Amen.*

Sung and played by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

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,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
People: Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn: Crux Fidelis, Faithful Cross, for Holy Cross Day on September 14th
Played by Joshua Charney

Faithful cross, above all others. One and only noble tree.
None is foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit thy peer may be.
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron.
Sweetest weight was hung on thee

Post Communion Prayer (BCP, page 365)

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Benediction:

Dismissal:

Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

Closing Hymn: Simple Gifts, Shaker tune

Played by Stanley V. Smith, Jr. on the Hammer Dulcimer

'tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free
'tis a gift to come down, where we ought to be
And when we find ourselves in the place just right
We be in the valley of love and delight
When true simplicity is gained
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed.
To turn, turn, will be a delight, till turning, turning we come around right.