

Order of Service for September 13, 2020 8:30 AM

A video of the service will “go live” at **8:45 AM** (note change in time) Sunday morning on Memorial’s YouTube page here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqritUPMNz38pvRJ04-17Kw> and on Memorial’s Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/mlcames/>

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: *“Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven”* - Hymn #793



Calling on God’s Name, Confessing our Sins, Receiving God’s Forgiveness

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: “As I live,” says the LORD God, “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live.”

C: **If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

P: Our God’s warnings are serious. So is God’s desire to forgive.

C: **We confess to You our sinfulness, and our helplessness to escape from it.**

We sin against one another and break apart what You have put together. We function selfishly. We are wicked; we are doomed to die. We beg Your mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your Son. Forgive us from our sins, and turn us from our ways.

P: Our God earnestly desires our salvation. . .and that we hear—and share—the word of reconciliation. Jesus Christ was given to die for us. For His sake I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Entrance Psalm:

P: Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord!

C: **I have fled to you for refuge!**

P: Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

C: **In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!**

P: Enter not into judgment with your servant,

C: **for no one living is righteous before you.**

ALL: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord!

C: I have fled to you for refuge!

Hymn of Praise: “This Is the Feast”- Page 155

P: O God, our refuge and strength, the author of all godliness, hear the devout prayers of Your Church, especially in times of persecution, and grant that what we ask in faith we may obtain; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

R: When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.” So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: ‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Reading: Romans 14:1-12

R: As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For 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, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? 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 confess to God.” So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse: Page 156

Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the eighteenth chapter.

C: (sung) Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Then Peter came up and said to [Jesus], “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: (sung) Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: “Chief of Sinners Though I Be” - Hymn 611

Sermon: “Unforgiving” - Matthew 18:21-35



We live in a culture that is unforgiving. Many of you remember that almost a year ago, College Game Day came to Iowa State for the Iowa/Iowa State game. One of the people who gained attention there was Carson King, whose sign asking for beer money attracted so much attention that it became a sensation and raised almost \$3 million for the University of Iowa’s Children’s Hospital. In researching the story, though, Des Moines Register reporter Aaron Calvin discovered some offensive tweets from years earlier. After

those were reported, King apologized and deleted the tweets, but the damage was done. Others looking online soon found the reporter had some offensive tweets of his own, and he found himself out of a job. Both young men were forgiven by some, but unforgiven by others.

That cancel culture continues to come after all sorts of people. No apology seems sincere or broad enough, no reputation pure enough to remain unsullied. From government officials to retail workers and everyone in-between, people make mistakes, and are left unforgiven by a culture that doesn't understand moral accountability outside of looking for an impossible balancing of the books.

Today we hear Peter wonder how many times to forgive. He thinks that seven should be the limit of how many times he should forgive. For us, even seven seems excessive. We learn from adages like "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me" and "three strikes and you're out" about how many times we should forgive. Seven seems to be an excessive amount of times to forgive.

Seven isn't an excessive amount of times to forgive for Jesus, though. Jesus doesn't just tell Peter to forgive instead seventy seven or four hundred ninety times. Jesus also tells a story, so that Peter, the other disciples, and we can learn from the example in the story. A servant owes a king a huge debt, not quite as big as the national debt, but big enough that the servant couldn't pay it off himself in a hundred years. When he appeals to the king for mercy, the king gives it to him. The servant goes off, and meets a fellow servant who owes a couple weeks' wages. Instead of learning from the example of the king, the first servant refuses to show mercy. When the king learns of this, the forgiveness is withdrawn. We learn from a story the importance of forgiveness, and the example of forgiveness.

In the parable of the unforgiving servant, from Matthew 18, debt is a synonym for sin. For the people of Jesus' day, just as of our own, debt was a part of their everyday life. They knew how easy it was to fall into debt by living beyond their means. They knew how that debt could become all consuming, affecting everything in their lives. They could even be sold into slavery for their debts. And so debt as a synonym for sin is not unique to this parable. Some translations of the Lord's Prayer remind us that we are to forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.

The problem is that when we think about sin as debt, we think about forgiveness like an accountant. We think about it as something that we have to repay, that we can work to repay if we could try. But that of course does not show the massive debt that we owe. If God were an accountant, we would be perpetually in debt. Not only do we owe God for everything that we have, but we are massively in debt because of the way that we waste what we have been given. We waste our time, we waste our money, and we waste our talents. Like the many Americans who are in credit card and mortgage debt, all that our waste does is get us more in debt.

But when we talk about sin as debt, we realize how foolish God's grace really is. The way that God forgives our debts is not the way that we would use to run a business. I have never taken a business class, but even I know that writing off a ten million dollar debt seems like an easy way

for you to lose your own company. Yet it is in forgiving that debt that we see God work. We see God working in a way that seems foolish to the world. We see God working in a new way, and that sets us up to see the differences between the way of God, the way of foolishness, the way of the cross, and the way of the world. That parable focuses us on the massive debt that God has forgiven us, and the smaller debts that we hold on to ourselves.

It also shows us how easy it is for us to hold onto the way that we are used to doing things instead of changing after being forgiven. It shows us how we can remain in our old lives instead of living in the new way of God's forgiveness. The unforgiving servant cannot conceive of so massive a debt being forgiven. There is no way that he would ever do that, so there is no way that it could ever happen to him. Even when it does happen, even when grace and forgiveness break into his life, he is left with his old way of doing things, his old way of keeping track of everyone's debt. He is unable to change, and leaves himself stuck in the old way of doing things.

If that's not enough, we hear in today's Old Testament lesson the culmination of the Joseph story. Joseph, of Technicolor Dreamcoat fame, is eleventh of twelve sons born to Jacob. He has several dreams that show his brothers bowing down to him, and when he tells his brothers about it, they throw him into a well and sell him into slavery.



Eventually, Joseph becomes an assistant to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and helps them through a long period of famine. Joseph's brothers come to Egypt, but don't recognize Joseph. Joseph forgives them, but the brothers worry that's only because their father is there. Now that their father has died, they think that Joseph is going to get even with them. They are finally going to get what they deserve.

Joseph doesn't live in the world of justice and getting even. Joseph had forgiven his brothers when he first revealed his identity to them, and that forgiveness hadn't changed with the death of their father. The brothers could hardly believe it, but they experienced forgiveness they didn't deserve.



Stories about the power of forgiveness aren't just found in the Bible. Many of you know I have two daughters, and that means I spend a lot of my free time watching princess movies. But one recently came with a surprising message. Princess Elena of Avalor was a series on Disney Junior that just aired its series finale last month. Elena had finally reached the age of maturity and was poised to be crowned queen. But she had one last test to pass before she could be crowned. Her cousin, Esteban, had betrayed her several times, and she held onto a grudge for those betrayals so much that she left her coronation preparations to go try to stop him and his magic allies. But after Esteban realized the cost all of his schemes had, he sacrifices himself to save Elena. That act allows Elena to forgive Esteban for all of his

treachery, and the power of the forgiveness is what defeats the evil spirits and allows for a happy series finale.

Forgiveness is what allows us to have happy endings to our stories, as well. Forgiveness brings people together whose relationships have been damaged by sin and resentment. Forgiveness brings us back to God. Despite all that pushes us to hold onto grudges and be unforgiving, we need to remember all that we have been forgiven of, what a gift we have received. Beginning there, we can bring the world together.

Confession of Faith: 5th Petition of Lord’s Prayer - **Page 324**

Hymn of Reflection: *“Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive”* - **Hymn 843**

Prayers of the Church: (when each petition ends and the pastor says, “Lord, in Your mercy,” respond “Hear our prayer.”)

Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: O God, You declare Your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity. Grant us the fullness of Your grace, that, pursuing what You promised, we may share Your heavenly glory, through Your Son. Jesus Christ, our Lord,

C: Amen.

Blessing: (pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”* - **Hymn 922**

