

Order of Worship for September 17, 2023

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: *“Where Charity and Love Prevail”* – Hymn #845

Confession and Absolution p. 203

Service of the Word

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!

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy) p. 204

Hymn of Praise: Gloria in Excelsis p. 204

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray...

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 p. 205

Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

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

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

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: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: *"What God Ordains Is Always Good"* - **Hymn #760**

Sermon: *"Where Is This Going?"* - **Genesis 50:15-21**

Findings in the journal "Psychological Medicine" showed that the 1970 generation was more likely than those born in 1958 to report symptoms of poor mental health at age 42, such as often feeling depressed, anxious or irritable. The increase in psychological distress was more prominent in men. Among those born in 1958, 10 per cent of men suffered from distress, compared to 16 percent of those born in 1970. Although women were more likely than men to report poor mental health in both generations, the rate rose less sharply for them – from 16 per cent in 1958 to 20 per cent 12 years later. This trend has been bad for this generation, the generation of many parents of students today. And it only seems worse for young people today.

That is why your parents can really feel the crunch you are in. A recent USA Today/Gallup poll finds that nearly 60 percent of Americans are also doubters. I meet many parents who fear the future that awaits their children. The young (and I draw the line at 40 and under) face two threats to their living standards. The first is the adverse effect of the Great Recession on jobs and wages. Even as this fades with time, there's the second threat: the costs of an aging America. It's not just Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid -- huge transfers from the young to the old -- but also deferred maintenance on roads, bridges, water systems and power grids. [Newsweek](#) called the young "generation screwed." One writer more mildly calls it "generation squeezed."

"Where's this all going?" That is the question so many young people face as they look into the future. It doesn't just have to be about the economy. It can be about the person you might spend the rest of your life with. It could be about switching a major. It could be about finding a new roommate. It could be about an illness. It could be about retirement. "Where is this all going?"

Joseph certainly faced that question as he saw all kinds of things happening. It wasn't just that bad things happened to him. They always seemed to happen when he thought things were getting better. He was his father Jacob's favorite son. That seemed great for him. But his jealous brothers seized him, threw him into a well, and then sold him as a slave to some traders. But as a slave in Egypt he grew to be entrusted as his master Potiphar's chief slave. Then that

was all ruined when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce and he resisted. She claimed to her husband that Joseph had tried to assault her, so Potiphar had him thrown in prison. Then he gained hope as he earned the trust of fellow inmates and interpreted their dreams. He asked one of them, who was about to be released, to put in a good word for him. But that man forgot. It seemed like Joseph was going nowhere.

But we know how it all ends up. When the king of Egypt, called the Pharaoh, has a dream, the former prisoner tells him about Joseph. Joseph interprets the dream as a prediction that Egypt will have seven years of good crops, then seven years of famine. The Pharaoh makes Joseph his number two man. When Joseph's brothers come to Egypt looking for food during the famine, Joseph reveals himself to them and tells them not to worry. He is able to see after all those years where God has sent him. It has been all about preparing for Joseph to save his family from famine.

Joseph found out where all his life was going. But what about you and me? There are times when perhaps we can see that—if a college degree does land us a good job, if a date leads to a good relationship with another person, if a job transfer leads to a happier work situation. But so often we don't have that kind of affirmation. Do we continue to struggle with this major or risk another one which may not land us a good job? Do we study abroad or stay here to save money? Do I hang in there with that tough class or drop it before it hurts my record? It is like trying to follow some professors' lectures. We ask, "Where is this going?"

Joseph may have seen where it was going. But that was only after years of questioning. And even after that Joseph didn't totally know where it was going. Though his father Jacob and the family were able to come to Egypt and live in comfort, and though he even got to meet his younger brother Benjamin whom he had never met, Joseph knew there had to be more to come. That is why he gave strict directions to his family to make sure that when he died his bones would be buried not in Egypt, but in modern day Israel, the land God had promised to his great-grandfather Abraham. Hebrews 11:21, in the great chapter about faith, says, "By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones." Over 440 years later, when Joshua led the people back into the promised land of Israel, they took with them the bones to Joseph and buried them.

Joseph also did not know where it was going with his family after he died. They were living securely in Egypt where they prospered. But as the years went on new Pharaohs forgot Joseph and felt threatened by the family of Jacob. They made slaves of them. Under Moses God rescued them from that slavery so they could return to the land promised to Abraham. Under Joshua they conquered that land, but time and time forgot God. Even when God provided them leaders like Gideon and Samuel, and David, they forgot. Eventually God had them exiled into Assyria and Babylon. Then, as He promised, they returned back to the land promised to Abraham. But they were not free. They were ruled by Persians, then Greeks, then Romans. But from them came the One who would bring God's promises true—Christ Jesus. Joseph didn't know where it was going—just that God was in charge.

We don't know where it is all going. But unlike Joseph we know about Christ Jesus. We know He is the Son of God. We know that He fulfilled all that was written about Him. We know that He went to that cross with all our sins and died with them. We know He rose on Easter. We know that He ascended so that He can be with us wherever we are. We know where it is going at the end—not to a life here on earth in security of Egypt, but to everlasting life with Jesus forever.

Joseph had his bones taken to Israel. Though Egypt gave him wealth and power, he looked to Israel for his future. He looked not to the life of this world, no matter how good it was, but to the eternal life with God. There he would finally know, "Where is this all going?"

We too can look forward to that. In heaven we can see how God used the events in our lives to not only keep us as His own, but to help others as well. Perhaps, like Joseph, we can look back and see how God has used us, but so often we can't. We so often focus on things—investments, degrees, published papers, job positions, community awards—to see what we have done in our lives. God looks into the hearts of the people we can touch. Sometimes we see that as we see peoples' lives changed as God works through us. But so often we don't. But in heaven we will see. That will be our great reward—to see people that God helped through us so often without us noticing it in this life!

In the meantime we will have many questions. Our lives will take many turns and twists as we are taken to places we never planned to go and with a lot of uncertainty of how it will play out. But we know our goal. It is the same as what we always can know every moment of our lives—Christ Jesus is ours.

We pray:

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Second and Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering and Voluntary

Service of the Sacrament

Preface and Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) p. 208

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Lord's Prayer p. 209

The Words of Our Lord, Pax Domini (*Peace of the Lord*) p. 209

Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*) p. 210

Distribution of Holy Communion

"I Leave All things to God's Direction" – **Hymn #719**

"Jesus Sinners Doth Receive" – **Hymn #609**

Nunc Dimittis: (*Now let us depart*) p. 211

Prayer After Communion: p. 212

Benedicamus and Benediction: p. 212

Closing Hymn: *"Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive"* – **Hymn #843**

Postlude

