

## The Third Sunday after Trinity YEAR C June 12, 2016

In conversations around justice and the Church, or justice and worship, the idea of forgiveness, it seems, is often absent. Perhaps in reaction to hyper-evangelical, “pray the prayer and you’re saved” theologies, we have moved into a place where we prefer to speak of actions that bring justice and wholeness, rather than attitudes. Perhaps we struggle with forgiveness because it could lead to letting perpetrators “off the hook”, or because those who regularly speak about forgiveness seem to use it as a way to avoid engagement with social justice issues, preferring to speak about the transformation of the heart alone.

However, the Gospel message of forgiveness cannot be avoided, and when we embrace it, we discover that it is central to any real work of justice and peace-making. May our ability to receive and give forgiveness be strengthened and expanded as we worship this week.

### INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**1 Kings 21:1-10, (11-14), 15-21a**: Jezebel and Ahab conspire to lay claim to Naboth’s vineyard. After Naboth has been falsely accused and executed, Elijah confronts Ahab with his sin and prophesies his death.

OR **2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15**: The prophet Nathan confronts David after he arranges for Uriah to die so that he can marry Bathsheba.

**Psalms 5:1-8**: A cry for help and guidance, and a recognition that God takes no delight in wickedness.

OR **Psalms 32**: David’s song of joy and thanksgiving for God’s forgiveness.

**Galatians 2:15-21**: It is not the law that can make us right with God, but only God’s grace which comes to us through Christ. We can only believe, die to the law, and live our lives in Christ.

**Luke 7:36-8:3**: Jesus is anointed in the home of Simon the Pharisee by an immoral woman. He confronts Simon’s hypocrisy and forgives her.

[Click here to view the readings.](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=1%20Kings](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=1%20Kings)

[%2021:%201-10,%2011-14,%2015-21a%0Acw%20Psalm](#)

[%205:%201-8%20%0AGalatians%202:%2015-21%0ALuke%207:%2036%20-%208:%203](#)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

O Lord,  
we beseech thee mercifully to hear us;  
and grant that we, to whom thou hast given  
an hearty desire to pray,  
may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted  
in all dangers and adversities;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Collect Two**

Almighty God,  
you have broken the tyranny of sin  
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts  
whereby we call you Father:  
Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,  
that we and all creation may be brought  
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Presider or deacon

As God's healing and peace spread among us, let us offer prayers for this broken world  
and for every person and every need.

Deacon or other leader

For this congregation and every holy gathering and for all who enter with faith.  
Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.  
Lord, have mercy.

For those in positions of public trust.  
Lord, have mercy.

For those discouraged by failure or disheartened by sin.  
Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the hungry and the  
oppressed, travelers and prisoners.  
Lord, have mercy.

For those who have died to life in this world.  
Lord, have mercy.

For all of us, justified by faith in Jesus Christ.  
Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with St \_\_\_\_\_ and all the saints, let us  
offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.  
To you, O Lord.

Presider

God who travels and eats with sinners, hear  
the prayers we offer this day and embrace  
with love your whole creation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## POST COMMUNION

O God,  
whose beauty is beyond our imagining  
and whose power we cannot comprehend:  
Give us a glimpse of your glory on earth  
but shield us from knowing more than we can bear  
until we may look upon you without fear;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

## PRAYERS

Beckoning God,  
as you moved in the lives of Elijah and Elisha,  
move in our lives,  
inviting us to journey to unknown territory,  
to listen for your voice,  
and to speak your prophetic word  
in a world that does not want to hear.  
empowered by your Spirit,  
grant us the courage we need  
to journey, trust, listen, speak,  
and accept your commission  
to be your faithful servant people. Amen.

Friends in Christ,  
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers  
as dear to us as our own needs.  
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,  
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions  
on behalf of the church and the world.  
and through the ministry of your Son  
free us from the grip of the tomb,  
that we may desire you as the fullness of life  
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,  
and guided them in the way of your love,  
so listen now to those who call upon you.  
Move us to praise your gracious will,  
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death  
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,  
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens  
and healed our spirits.  
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,  
those seeking healing,  
those in need within the church and the world.

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Hear our prayers  
that we may love you with our whole being  
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Creator God,  
you call us to love and serve you  
with body, mind, and spirit  
through loving your creation  
and our sisters and brothers.  
Open our hearts in compassion  
and receive these petitions  
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.  
Holy One,  
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards  
of the fragile bounty of this earth  
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,  
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,  
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.  
We offer these prayers of love  
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours,  
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.  
Loving God,  
open our ears to hear your word  
and draw us closer to you,  
that the whole world may be one with you  
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,  
you who hear the cries of those in need,  
receive these petitions of your people  
that all who are troubled  
may know peace, comfort, and courage.  
Life-giving God,  
heal our lives,  
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds  
and offer you thanks from generation to generation  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,  
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,  
hear our prayers  
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,  
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings  
with your unending compassion.  
Redeeming Sustainer,  
visit your people  
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,  
that we may hurry to make you welcome  
not only in our concern for others,

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but by serving them  
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

God of compassion,  
you suffer in the grief of your people,  
and you are present to heal and forgive.  
May the sun of your justice rise on every night of oppression,  
and may the warm rays of your healing love  
renew each troubled mind;  
for you are the God of salvation and new life,  
made known to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Merciful God,  
your ready forgiveness makes us bold to confess our sins.  
Grant that we may die to sin  
and become fully alive by faith in Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### LECTIONARY NOTES

#### REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

There is no way to avoid it. This week, the readings are all about forgiveness – especially forgiveness that is undeserved, and that comes through confession, brokenness and repentance. The difference between Ahab and David is this broken repentance. The psalmists cry is of confession and a plea for forgiveness. Paul makes it clear that we are made right not by our own efforts and obeying the law, but through the grace of Christ. Jesus confronts the religious elite who make the law a gatekeeper to God, and offers forgiveness and restoration to a broken and penitent woman. The power of this undeserved forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian experience and allows us to live “in Christ” – or live as those in whom Christ lives, as Paul puts it.

#### CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** Let’s dream a little: what might a world look like in which forgiveness was our culture rather than retribution and retaliation? In what ways is the prophetic ministry of Elijah and Nathan an example to us of how to confront those who abuse their power, while still offering grace and forgiveness? In what ways can we work to make forgiveness a serious consideration in our policies (especially with regard to corrections, law enforcement, social services, immigration, health care, education and foreign policy)? Is all this just a bit too idealistic for the real world? Or is there truth in the idea that a world without forgiveness must ultimately destroy itself? If the Gospel has anything to say to the big issues of our time, the gift of forgiveness must have a place in this conversation. Perhaps it’s time for the Church to call both oppressed and oppressor to forgiveness, both perpetrator and victim to forgiveness, both aggressor and defender to forgiveness. Perhaps, if the Church’s public discourse was more biased toward repentance for our own failings (think of the sex scandals currently rocking many churches) and forgiveness toward those who have hurt or opposed us, people would be more interested in listening to us. And perhaps, we would have the kind of gracious, Christ-reflecting influence on the world that we hope to have.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** Often when conversation about forgiveness come up, it is common to speak about repentance as the requirement for forgiveness. And so, as

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Church, we have rejected and judged others on the basis of their perceived lack of repentance. However, for Jesus, it seems, repentance is a response to forgiveness, not a pre-requisite for it. On the cross Jesus says “It is finished” without waiting for the world to queue up to repent. In his dealings with this woman, she comes to him in love and brokenness, but Jesus indicates that her love flows from her being forgiven much, not that her love is the requirement which “earns” her forgiveness. For Jesus, it appears, forgiveness is contingent on nothing. He chooses to forgive whether the other person repents/changes or not. Forgiveness is the mark of those who follow Christ, and it is in the reckless freedom in which this forgiveness is offered that part of the scandal of the Gospel lies. Forgiveness which is based upon a legalistic need for evidence of repentance first is what both Jesus and Paul reject. Both appear to believe implicitly in the power of the experience of being forgiven to change people. Perhaps part of our struggle to reach the world in Christ’s name, and to really influence the culture of our world, lies in our determined clinging to “repentance first, forgiveness second”. How many hurting and broken people might find healing, justice and an ability to contribute to others if they were just assured of God’s forgiveness up front, and if we trusted God’s grace to be strong enough to really make a difference? Is this not a significant work of justice in itself?

### SERMON OUTLINES

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#### 'Your Son is Alive'

1 Kings 17:17-24; Psalm 146; Galatians 1:11-24; Luke 7:11-17

Biblical faith attests that God, creator of the world, is the giver of life, even in a world of deathliness. While that claim is pervasive in faith, it is rooted in specific, nameable moments when God’s power for life was particularly concentrated and effective in contexts of death. In these readings, we have two such specific moments. Elijah is presented as the one who gave life to the widow’s son: He prayed, and then declared to the mother, “See, your son is alive” (1 Kings 17:23). In a reprise of that narrative, Jesus commanded the widow’s only son, “Young man, I say to you, rise!” (Luke 7:14). In neither case does the narrative explain nor speculate. It only bears witness. It asserts that God has moved powerfully beyond all of our categories to offer new life. In these moments, the creator enacts the new creation.

From that, the church echoes Israel in doxology concerning the God who gives new life to prisoners, the blind, the bowed down, strangers, orphans, and widows (Psalm 146:8-9). Such practices, in neighbourly action and in broad policy concerns, exhibit God’s way in and intention for the world. This God is a “help,” as the psalmist says, toward that life, exactly when human agents are “no help.”

It is to this life-giving God that Paul is summoned as witness and apostle. And of course, Paul intends that the churches he addresses should join him in praise and obedience to the God of life. This requires a bold confidence (the kind that Paul exhibits) that refuses the world’s deathliness and that acts with and toward the new life God gives. The psalm summarizes that new way in the world as “justice for the oppressed” (Psalm 146:7). Easter faith is indeed revolutionary in the world. The Spirit of Pentecost is the Spirit of new life, the force not stopped, even by our fear of that newness.

### Pray and Act

1 Kings 21:1-21a; Psalm 5:1-8; Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7:36 - 8:3

In Galatians 2:15-21 Paul offers a classic statement about an alternative life that is lived out of God's limitless generosity, for which we use the term "grace." The other readings may be taken as commentary on this contrast between a graced life and a life propelled and measured by self-securing.

The psalm voices a prayer for God's attentive protection against "boastful evildoers" (5:5) who are "bloodthirsty and deceitful" (5:6) and counted as "my enemies" (5:8). As usual, the psalm provides no particulars about the social crisis reflected in the prayer. If we look for a set of particulars that fit this prayer, the narrative of 1 Kings 21 provides such a case. We may imagine Naboth, owner of a small plot of land that the king covets, as the petitioner in the psalm. King Ahab and his co-conspirator Jezebel qualify as "bloodthirsty and deceitful" evildoers who are clearly adversaries of Naboth in their quest for his land that eventually requires his life. Naboth himself does not pray in the narrative. But the subsequent intervention of Elijah the prophet indicates just such an advocacy for "your righteousness" in the face of usurpatious wickedness (Psalm 5:8). Thus the narrative of Naboth and the generic voice of the psalm give flesh to Paul's defining categories.

In Luke's gospel, moreover, the "woman in the city who was a sinner" (7:37) acts with uncommon generosity toward Jesus, while the host Pharisee stands, with the self-securing, under Paul's indictment. The contrast is clear and complete: "You gave me no water for my feet ... you gave me no kiss ... you did not anoint my head with oil" (7:44-45). She is forgiven while the host receives nothing from Jesus. All of these texts witness to the summons put before us by the gospel—a choice between self-securing that brings death or reliance upon God's generosity. The psalmist prays and the woman performs. Both prayer and performance belong properly to the new life offered in God's goodness.

### Powerless Before Demons

1 Kings 19:1-15a; Psalms 42, 43; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 8:26-39

Paul's witness is that, in Christ, we may be freed from all the "disciplinarians" that restrict our lives. Entry into that new life of gospel freedom, through baptism, is like changing clothes; that is, changing self. In the new life, all of the old classifications and stratifications are eliminated (Galatians 3:28). In the gospel narrative we see "a man from the city who had demons" (Luke 8:27). We may imagine, in contemporary context, the demons are any form of addiction—drugs, sex, money, power, control, self-promotion. Such demons preclude much of the life that we want to live. But Jesus has the power to give the man a new life of freedom, beyond the grip of all the demons. The man in his new life is "in his right mind" (8:35).

That new life requires bold, risk-taking human agents to be enacted. The Elijah narrative in 1 Kings portrays the risks the prophet ran in obedience to the God of life. And then he is spent (19:4, 10)! But then, like the needy man addressed by Jesus, Elijah is cared for and sent on his way. We may imagine that Elijah (or the man with Jesus) is the one who speaks the psalms. The speaker is exhausted, bereft of resources, thirsty for God and for new life. But this voice refuses to give in. While "cast down" (42:5; 43:5), the psalmist calls for "hope in God" (42:5, 11; 43:5).

In the extremities of our life, we are powerless for ourselves. Just so the man with Jesus is powerless in the face of his demons. And Paul reflects on being "imprisoned" (Galatians

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3:23). But then freedom, restoration, and new life flow through. New energy for mission (1 Kings 19:15)! New life for testimony (Luke 8:39)! New life by promise (Galatians 3:29)! These readings trace the hard journey from bondage to freedom, from death to joy in life. No wonder the guy with Jesus went away "proclaiming how much Jesus had done for him" (8:39).

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

**Alabaster Extravagance** - the Rev. Dr. Mary Anderson (ELCA), Day 1

[http://day1.org/4892-alabaster\\_extravagance](http://day1.org/4892-alabaster_extravagance)

**All of us part Pharisee and part sinful woman**, - the Rev. Ken Kesselus, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/05/31/4-pentecost-proper-6-c-2013/>

**A Place of Welcome**, - the Rev. James T. Moore, Day 1

[http://day1.org/1048-a\\_place\\_of\\_welcome](http://day1.org/1048-a_place_of_welcome)

**Illustrations for specific scripture readings on a specific day**

<http://www.preachingtoday.com/lectionary/?season=Season%20after%20Pentecost&year=C>

### CHILDREN

**Worshiping with Children**, Fathers Day and Juneteenth, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown  
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/year-c-proper-6-11th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

"[Sermon of the Week](#)," / "[Mensajes para ninos](#)," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.  
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

**Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity**, Ordinary 11, at word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding  
<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

### HYMN SUGGESTIONS

And Can It Be  
Amazing Grace  
Let Us Plead For Faith Alone  
There's A Wideness In God's Mercy  
Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)  
Jesus Messiah  
Shout To The North And The South  
Hallelujah, What A Saviour  
Freely, Freely (God Forgave My Sin)

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)



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