

13 September
Exodus 14:19-31
Psalm 114
Or Canticle: Exodus
15:1b, 20-21
Romans 14:1-12
Matthew 18:21-35

Lectionary Reflections

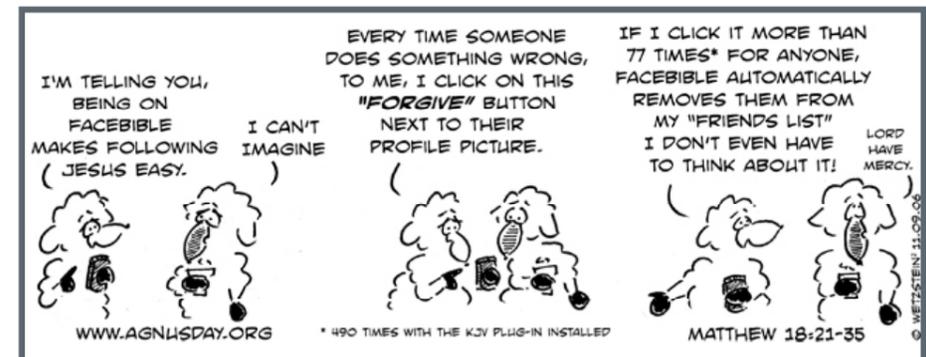
Matthew 18:21-35

This is a rather paradoxical parable, isn't it?! The king is so furious with the slave for not being forgiving, that he hands him over to be tortured (probably indefinitely). Is this a king who forgives seventy-seven times?

This parable refuses to answer some of our questions, but its main thrust seems clear enough. The debt the 'unforgiving servant' owes to the king is silly money: a talent is worth more than fifteen years wages of a labourer, and the servant owes him 10,000 of them, so 150,000 years of wages! On the other hand, the servant is owed 100 denarii – 100 days wages by his fellow servant. All our wrong doing, including our thoughts and our selfish and judgemental attitudes is sin against God, so God forgives us so very, very much; weighed against that, the sins of others that God asks us to forgive are usually a different order of magnitude.

Is God's forgiveness of us conditional upon our forgiving of others? We usually suggest that God's love is unconditional – bigger than that. Nevertheless, when we pray 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us', do we remember 150,000 years of wages versus 100 days of wages?

Penny Worth



Happy New (Methodist) Year! What a year it has been – the pandemic has brought so much fear, loss and disruption, but how comforting that God is still the same amazing Lord, whose love and compassion never changes. To quote a favourite hymn: 'This, this is the God we adore, our faithful unchangeable friend'.

Before lockdown, after much thought and prayer, Tony and I came to an important decision: we will curtail our time here, and move back to Kettering in August 2021, a year earlier than planned. We consulted the Warden of the MDO (Methodist Diaconal Order) and Revd. Peter, and then informed the Circuit Leadership Team. We will be 'sitting down' – this is the Methodist terminology for retirement or rather ceasing to be in itinerant ministry, as old ministers never really retire! We will move further south to be nearer to my mum in Bedford, and to our daughter, son in law and grandson Hugo in Derby. During lockdown the 'rightness' of this decision was confirmed as (like many others) we went for months without seeing any family or close friends and the distances involved compounded this.

It is far too early to start saying goodbyes yet though - we'll be here for another 11 months!

For now, I was struck by two questions posed to Deacons in this extraordinary season, which are relevant to all Christians: What really matters? and What is ours to do? I invite you to join with us in prayerful pondering of those questions. What do they mean for us as a circuit, as local churches, as individual disciples? What does the Lord require of you, me, us? May we be given the courage, vision and obedience to follow where He leads.

Peace, love and blessings,

Deacon Fiona

Coronavirus Guidance Latest Update

I am very grateful to the church stewards, property stewards and many others, who have worked so hard recently to prepare our buildings for worship. Setting out seating, providing sanitiser, putting up posters and recording attendance are all in place to help us be and feel safe when going to a service. I know not everyone feels the time is yet right to return to church and we recognise that everyone's needs are different. The latest rise in infection rates have been unsettling and cause increased anxiety especially among the older and more infirm members of the community. As a result of this, you will have heard the latest Government guidance on social groups being limited to 6, both indoors and outdoors.

Many churches have just reopened for worship again. We are thankful that it was announced on Wednesday that places of worship, where the appropriate and necessary measures are taken (as above), can still be used for services.

I remind you that you need to wear a face covering, sanitise on arrival and departure, not sing, and keep your distance from one another (except for anyone from your household) – these are essential to keep yourself and others safe. Please do NOT socialise within the building, but leave immediately after worship, and if you want to chat do so outside, but even then only in small groups (i.e. fewer than 6). A message from the Archbishop of Canterbury reminds us: 'Let's keep praying for everyone who is affected – those who are ill, or whose families are ill, those who are anxious, or struggling with cancelled plans and isolation. We give grateful thanks to God for the NHS and all those who work tirelessly to keep us safe.'

Peter

Welcome to Ryedale

We welcome Rev Pat Malham into the Circuit. She has retired from being the Superintendent minister of the Ripon & Lower Dales Circuit and has moved to Helmsley area.

Pat is going to take some time to adjust to her new role as a supernumerary and then we look forward to seeing her around the Circuit.

Happiness is ...
appreciating what really matters in life



CONTACT:

Revd Peter Sheasby
7 Pinfold Garth
Malton
YO17 7XQ
peter.sheasby@methodist.org.uk
01653 692173

Revd Ken Gowland
gowlo@hotmail.com
01439 770300

Deacon F & Revd T deBoltz
01751 430750
Revd J Pickering
01653 668628

Ann Thomas
(administrative assistant)
ryedalemethodists@gmail.com



Residents, members and staff at Methodist Homes (MHA) have been remembered in a special service held by the charity to mark the first six months of the pandemic. Since the onset of Covid-19, MHA across the country has sadly lost more than 400 older people for whom it provided care and support and three members of its staff. Colleagues across MHA have been at the forefront of care and support for older people during this most challenging of times, both in its homes and community settings. A special service was broadcast to all its homes and schemes on Friday 4 September, and was followed by a two-minute silence and reflection along with the lighting of a candle. Relatives were able to join in through the service being broadcast on YouTube.

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