

St Peter's Anglican Church, Bundoora

15<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost – 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday 10/09/2023

Readings: Exodus 14 19-31 / Ps 114 / Romans 14 1-14 / Matthew 18 21-35

(Readings are from New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised)

Sermon Theme: *forgiveness and judgement.*

By Rev'd Stephen Monsieigneur

### Exodus 14 19-31

<sup>19</sup> The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. <sup>20</sup> It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. <sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup> The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. <sup>23</sup> The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. <sup>24</sup> At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. <sup>25</sup> He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.' <sup>26</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.' <sup>27</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup> The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. <sup>29</sup> But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. <sup>30</sup> Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup> Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

### Psalms 114

- <sup>1</sup> When Israel came out of Egypt:  
and the house of Jacob from among a people  
of an alien tongue,
- <sup>2</sup> Judah became his sanctuary:  
and Israel his dominion.
- <sup>3</sup> The sea saw that, and fled:  
Jordan was driven back.
- <sup>4</sup> The mountains skipped like rams:  
and the little hills like young sheep.
- <sup>5</sup> What ailed you, O sea, that you fled:  
O Jordan, that you were driven back?
- <sup>6</sup> You mountains, that you skipped like rams:  
and you little hills like young sheep?

- <sup>7</sup> Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord:  
     at the presence of the God of Jacob,  
<sup>8</sup> Who turned the rock into a pool of water:  
     and the flint-stone into a welling spring.

### **Romans 14 1-14**

- <sup>1</sup> Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions.  
<sup>2</sup> Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.  
<sup>3</sup> Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.  
<sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgement 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.  
<sup>5</sup> 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.  
<sup>6</sup> Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.  
<sup>7</sup> We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.  
<sup>8</sup> 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.  
<sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.  
<sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God.  
<sup>11</sup> For it is written,  
     'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,  
     and every tongue shall give praise to God.'  
<sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will be accountable to God.  
<sup>13</sup> Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of another.  
<sup>14</sup> I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

### **Matthew 18 21-35**

- <sup>21</sup> Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. <sup>23</sup> 'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup> When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> 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." <sup>29</sup> Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." <sup>30</sup> But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" <sup>34</sup> And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup> So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

## SERMON.

How often do we hear of feuds among family or people who were once close friends. A reality of being human is that at some point we will offend someone else or be offended by them. How we respond will determine the future of the relationship, of or growth and maturity.

Christian life starts and continues with the experience of Gods mercy. As confessions and promises are made to God in Baptism and Confirmation, as we recite our admission of failure;

*Merciful God,  
our maker and our judge,  
we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,  
and in what we have failed to do:  
we have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;  
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.  
Father, forgive us....<sup>1</sup>*

..... so we trust God forgives us and through the Holy Spirit fills us with new life. As Christians we are called then to share that mercy with others through our willingness to be generous, to love unconditionally and importantly to forgive.

I suspect that there is not a single adult alive who has never offended or also been offended by someone. Saying to someone who has offended us "it's okay" may be simple but the decision to truly forgive can be difficult.

Difficult as it may be, being able to forgive is essential to relationships, those we have with family and friends and the one we have with Christ. Humanity sinned and it was Jesus who suffered death, it was Jesus who trusted God to the extent that he was willing to be the sacrifice for the fall of humanity and it was humanity that hung him on the cross. But still he loves and intercedes for us. The best we can do is offer forgiveness to each other for the offences we experience in the everyday. How have you felt when you realise you have offended someone, only to be forgiven by them? Did the knowing that you were forgiven, given a second chance influence your sense

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<sup>1</sup> APBA (1995, p126)

of self and/or the relationship? How did things progress when forgiveness was withheld?

We need to be aware that when Peter asks how often he must forgive his brother, and Jesus replies seventy-seven times, Jesus is using the number as a metaphor to stress the point that there is no limit to the times we must forgive. As Christians we should be doing our best to be like Jesus, and this means developing our ability to forgive. But what is forgiveness? What does it look like?

Jesus using the story in today's gospel shows us what forgiveness both looks like and what it does not look like. The king absorbing the cost by forgiving the enormous debt of his servant represents Jesus whose death on the cross pays the price of humanity's sin. Like the King who is generous and wanting good for his servant, Jesus being fully human and sacrificing himself comes out of unconditional love for us.

Now we have a choice. Are we to emulate as best we can the action of the King, of Jesus? or will we be the debtor in the story who after being granted such a blessing refused to then share what he had received with another who owed him much less?

While true forgiveness means the debt is paid, the matter is finished. It does not mean we completely forget the event; such action will prohibit our opportunity to learn and grow. But with true forgiveness comes the ability to discuss the experience without blame or excuse. The offence occurred how do we prevent it occurring again.

When we hold on to grudges and resentments we are like the debtor. As we experience God's infinite mercy in our own lives, we must ask ourselves: Given how often God has forgiven me, do I have the right to withhold my forgiveness from someone else?

I suggest moving forward we reflect on where we may be withholding forgiveness and pray that God will bless us with all we need so that the mercy God continues to show us will flow more freely from us to others.

Amen.