**21st June 2020 Proper 7 Green Father’s Day**

**Genesis 21.8-21  Psalm 86.1-10,16-17\* Romans 6.1b-11 Matthew 10.24-39**

**Opening responses**

**Listen Lord, and help us listen to you.**

Listen to the hidden words we cannot say.

Listen to the hurts we cannot bear.

Listen to our joy and our hope.

Listen as we stumble to find words to give you thanks.

**Listen Lord, and help us listen to you.**

**Collect**

Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ’s sake, Amen.

**Reading Romans 6.1b-11**

1Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Reflection**

Paul is a marmite person in the bible, love or loath him? Although at times I do both. He has a style of writing that means it is sometimes extremely easy to “see” him saying all the things he writes.

This reading from Romans starts with one of these episodes. He seems to be laughing at our (the recipients of the letter) naivety. Carry on sinning so grace must work hard? Don’t be silly! If you understand Christ and his saving love through the cross and resurrection, if you understand you are part of the family of God. If you understand you are part of God’s kingdom, how can you live consciously choosing sin? By becoming part of the body of Christ, we also are choosing to live knowing the reality of the cost Jesus paid for our peace. Paul tries to help by underpinning the reality of being one with Christ. Christ dwells in us and therefore he is part of who we are. How can we sin if Christ lives in us? How can we further hurt God by choosing to taking the free gift of forgiveness as a party trick that we can abuse as a rescue package?

The attitude of “Oh it is ok to sin and Jesus has forgiven us” has to be wrong. Should we not strive to live in an awareness of God’s grace and love? Should we not strive to place our feet into Jesus’ footprints and walk with him the way of love? The way of love leads out of sin not into it!

One of my favourite passages is the Prodigal Son and this prayer “Prodigal Blessing” by the wonderful Gerald Kelly helps us to remember a little more clearly what God our Father is really like:

*May you always know where the road home begins*

*And have the courage to walk the first mile.*

*May you never be too far from a lifeline and never too far gone to dial.*

*May you know the God who pursues you is a hunter whose bullets bleed mercy.*

*May artful accidents of grace explode at every turn of your journey.*

*May you trip over the truth and hall headlong into hope.*

*May redemption rain down all around you*

*May God’s glory catch you napping and God’s story catch your breath*

*And God’s gratuity perpetually astound you*

*May choices you made at random turn out to be the key to moving on.*

*May the darkness that sometimes surrounds you*

*prove to be the moment before day*

*Mary you bathe in the light of a prodigal sun*

*and be nourished by a generous earth.*

*May the struggles you meet make you stronger*

*and even old wounds bring new wonders to birth.*

*May you trip over the truth and hall headlong into hope.*

*May redemption rain down all around you*

*May God’s glory catch you napping and God’s story catch your breath*

*And God’s gratuity perpetually astound you*

*May the unplanned kindness of strangers bring to mind a long forgotten song. May the unexpected kisses of a star-filled sky remind you of where you belong.*

*And even if you never return to find peace*

*amongst those who have so loved and so hurt you,*

*may you seek your soul’s redeemer and connect with your creator*

*and make your home with the Father who waits for you.*

*May you trip over the truth and hall headlong into hope.*

*May redemption rain down all around you*

*May God’s glory catch you napping and God’s story catch your breath*

*And God’s gratuity perpetually astound you*

*The Prodigal Blessing by Gerald Kelly in “Spoken Worship”*

**Intercessions for Father’s Day by Kirk Loadman amended**

Let us praise those fathers who have striven to balance the demands of work, marriage, and children with an honest awareness of both joy and sacrifice. Let us thank God for those fathers who, lacking a good model for a father, have worked to become a good father.

Let us thank God for those fathers who by their own account were not always there for their children, but who continue to offer those children, now grown, their love and support. Let us pray for those fathers who have been wounded by the neglect and hostility of their children.

Let us thank God for those fathers who, despite divorce, have remained in their children's lives. Let us thank God for those fathers whose children are adopted, and whose love and support has offered healing.

Let us thank God for those fathers who, as stepfathers, freely choose the obligation of fatherhood and earned their stepchildren’s love and respect. Let us pray for those fathers who have lost a child to death and continue to hold the child in their heart.

Let us thank God for those men who have no children but cherish the next generation as if they were their own. Let us thank God for those men who have "fathered" us in their role as mentors and guides. Let us thank God for those men who are about to become fathers; may they openly delight in their children.

Let us pray to God for those fathers whose example was one of sadness, pain, isolation or manipulation, for the children who were damaged by their actions, that they may turn from their ways, and be ready to seek forgiveness from those they have wronged, those whose lived have be shadowed by the experiences of pain.

Nurturing God, thank you for those who have nurtured us. Open our eyes to the plight of so many fathers and mothers around the world for whom life is difficult. Help us share your love and mercy with them.

And let us thank God for those fathers who have died but live on in our memory and whose love continues to nurture us. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour and brother Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Closing Thanksgiving:**

For hearing our prayers: **We give you thanks.**

For our friends around us: **We give you thanks.**

For the gift of your Son: **We give you thanks.**

For being our Father: **We give you thanks.**

For our lives and Your love**: Our thanks never end.**

For blessing us and loving us **Our thanks never end.**

Go and live in peace

as your Father asks of you. **We go in peace and love. Amen.**