

## Thursday Prayer 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023 at 10.30am

### Focus: “Forgiving each other” – Philip Baker

#### Zoom connecting details and link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89729198133?pwd=K1V0Vy83NmoxT2JLRDZPNdDTHpHZz09>

Meeting ID: 897 2919 8133

Passcode: 771395

Welcome to everyone taking part this morning, whether in the Cathedral or joining remotely via Zoom.

#### Introductory prayers:

We say together - **God of forgiveness, we ask for your unfailing love to be with us today, so that we may reach out to others with love and compassion. Help us to seek peace and reconciliation with each other, and unite us as one family of God to your glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

We pray for members and events in the diocese: For the upcoming Diocesan Autumn Meeting and for the Task Group Leaders reviewing their work during the year; for all those working for the end of modern slavery in all its many forms both here in the UK and around the world. We give thanks for the work of the Branches whatever that might be, some raising money in support of Mothers’ Union initiatives, and others working towards a myriad of individual objectives – The Mothers’ Union benefits from them all. We give special thanks for our members around the world, all 4 million of us, who share the desire to improve the lives of others, especially through work with families and support of family life. Finally, we give thanks for Mary Sumner, a most special lady without whom our movement would not exist.

The theme for this morning is “Forgiving each other” and the reading is taken from the Gospel of Mark

#### Reading: Mark 11:25 - “A forgiving spirit required” (NIV)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

#### Reflection:

The reading from Mark is very short, but all the more powerful for it. In spite of its brevity, it contains a great deal for us to consider. Mark gives these words as a quote from the words of Jesus so they are especially worthy of our attention and reflect the words we say whenever we recite the prayer our Saviour taught us, the Lords Prayer: “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us”. It can therefore be safely assumed that Forgiving each other is actually a very fundamental requirement of being a Christian. But why? Well, if we do not forgive each other then we are not forgiven for the things we have done which are wrong, be it in thought, word or deed. Without being forgiven, we cannot achieve the state of Grace through which we can receive eternal life with God.

Paul writes to the Ephesians (4:32): “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”. Here Paul cites the example that God gave us where his son, Jesus Christ, was sacrificed for us for the forgiveness of our sins; that we may be in the Grace of our Lord. But there is a catch – we have to forgive others in the same way, or we are breaking the Commandment to “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31). And to the Colossians Paul writes this (3:12-15): “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in

perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

There are so many examples in the Bible of the need for us to repent of our own sins whilst also forgiving others. Luke writes in Acts 2:38 “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”” Then Matthew most comprehensively covers the issue in 6:14-15 “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” We can rely on Paul to be direct!

We also know how much better we feel when we cease to feel antagonistic towards someone for some perceived wrong, often not intended. It is as though we can feel a physical effect of God’s Grace settling on our shoulders (well it does for me!). That is not to say that it is always easy; sometimes the hurt from some slight or insult or act can be very hard to turn away from and forgive, to “turn the other cheek”. But nevertheless, that is what we are to do. And not only act forgiving, but be forgiving from our hearts! Furthermore, as Matthew says in 18:21-22 “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” So we have to keep doing it, over and over, and graciously.

What we have seen is a wide variety of biblical writers all giving the same message about forgiveness. We even have God’s words in the Lord’s Prayer urging repentance and forgiveness. There is a common thread that we need to do this in our daily lives and that, if we do, we will experience God’s Peace and, ultimately, eternal life with Him. So let us renew our attempts to live by God’s word, however challenging that may be. Surely the potential rewards are worth the effort?

This may be thought of as giving our lives to God, following His ways and living in harmony and peace with all our neighbours. The words of the traditional hymn “Take my life” express this very well.

**Hymn: Take my life    Mission Praise 624**

**Take my life, and let it be / consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days, / let them flow in ceaseless praise.**

**Take my hands, and let them move / at the impulse of Thy love;  
Take my feet, and let them be / swift and beautiful for Thee.**

**Take my voice, and let me sing / always, only, for my King;  
Take my lips, and let them be / filled with messages from Thee.**

**Take my silver and my gold, / not a mite would I withhold;  
Take my intellect, and use / every power as Thou shalt choose.**

**Take my will, and make it Thine; / it shall be no longer mine:  
Take my heart, it is Thine own; / it shall be Thy royal throne.**

**Take my love; my Lord, I pour / at Thy feet its treasure store:  
Take myself, and I will be / ever, only, all, for Thee.**

**The Mothers' Union Prayer:** We say together:

**Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all.**

**We pray for families around the world.**

**Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.**

**Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world.**

**In Jesus' name. Amen**

**Mothers' Union Prayer Diary** – The following fit our focus perfectly:

The theme of the month is "Peace and Reconciliation"

The theme for the week is "Work of reconciliation"

The prayer for today is: Lord, we pray for peace in our own hearts and lives, particularly in those places where we nurse unresolved issues and resentments. Please heal us and set us free to move forward in wholeness.

The Wave of Prayer for today is for: Rumbek in South Sudan, Soroti in Uganda, Aba Ngwa North & Oyo in Nigeria, Peterborough in England and North Eastern Caribbean & Aruba.

**Our Intercessions:**

We pray for:

The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union;

Our Worldwide President, Sharon Harper;

The Chief Executive, Bev Jullien, and all who work at Mary Sumner House supporting members;

Our Diocesan President, Hazel Williams, and our Trustees and Task Group Leaders;

Our Provincial President, Kathryn Anderson and all members in the Province of Canterbury

Our Worldwide Links: Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnager in India;

The Diocese Links: Kigali and Vellore.

And we also pray for:

Our own parishes in the Ely Diocese, our families, and our friends

Anyone known to us who is unwell or in need

Those suffering directly or indirectly from a lack of forgiveness or who find themselves unable to forgive

The many countries around the world experiencing conflict, oppression, natural disasters and anywhere where people live in fear or poverty.

**The Mothers' Union Thursday Prayer**, we say together:

**Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers, we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

**The Grace**