

Living the Word

Psalm 103. 1-7

The psalms are the hymn book of the Bible and this is a wonderful hymn of praise. The opening with its reference to illness suggests it may have been written as a personal thanksgiving after sickness. The first five verses stress the blessings we have received from God, as they celebrate His forgiveness and love. We rejoice to be satisfied with God's goodness, which almost certainly means actually knowing the divine presence. Moses, in the Book of Exodus (33:19) asks to see the glory of God and the Almighty agrees that His 'goodness' will pass by him. The last two verses of the psalm stress the importance of justice for God, as shown by the way He used Moses to rescue the Israelites from the injustice of slavery in Egypt. The New Testament makes clear that Christ knew and loved the psalms, and believed himself to be fulfilling them. Christ was the second and better Moses who dispensed God's justice and mercy upon those in need. This is a psalm that all of us can prayerfully recite after experiencing a sense of the forgiveness and mercy of God in our own lives. doing so.

O Sing unto the Lord

Many great missionary hymns came to be as a result of the 19th Century revival movement, often with wonderful use of militaristic imagery which is now sometimes seen as outdated. *Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim* was written by George Kitchin (1827-1912) and Michael Newbolt (1874-1956) for a Festival of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, held in Winchester Cathedral (where Kitchin was Dean) in June 1887. The particular emphasis on the cross as a 'sign' recalls the story of the Emperor Constantine's vision and the words 'In hoc signo vinces' ('in this sign thou shalt conquer') which is also the motto of The Society of the Holy Cross (SSC), founded in London in 1855 by a small group of Anglo-Catholic priests led by Father Charles Lowder of S. Peter's, London Docks. The hymn is always associated with the tune *Crucifer* by Sir Sydney Nicholson, who was founder of the School of English Church Music, which later became the Royal School of Church Music, to which many of our church choirs are affiliated.

Prayers to Remember

Lord Jesus, you opened the eyes of the blind, healed the sick, forgave the sinful woman, and after Peter's denial confirmed him in your love. Listen to my prayer: forgive all my sins, renew your love in my heart, help me to live in perfect unity with my fellow Christians that I may proclaim your saving power to all the world. Amen.

An Act of Contrition inspired by the Gospels.

13th September
2020

The Fourteenth
Sunday after Trinity
24th Sunday
of the Year

From the Heart



Everyone is familiar with the petition in the Lord's Prayer: 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Today's Gospel provides the Divine reasoning behind that prayer. First, the parable makes it quite clear it is cruel and wicked to accept forgiveness but not to give it. Secondly, it spells out the consequences of withholding forgiveness – we end up being tortured. Inevitably, confronted with the injustice of hard heartedness and being made aware of our cruel vicious judgment of others, we end up with a tortured conscience, and a burden of guilt. God's justice will not be denied. Being unforgiving is to shut ourselves off from God's love and mercy. Thirdly, the profound irony of the parable is that the man at the centre of the story was forgiven for a debt far greater than the one owed to him. The forgiveness and mercy that Jesus has won for us in his death and resurrection is created by a love so tender and merciful that it is beyond our imagination. If we begin with reflecting on this truth we will have no trouble in forgiving someone else from our heart.

