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Sunday 13th September 2020 Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Collect

Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 50: 15-21

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, "Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Epistle: Romans 14: 1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. 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. 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. 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. 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. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 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. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 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. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God

Holy Gospel: Matthew 18: 21-35

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?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; 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. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 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.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 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. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Reflection

In this reading Paul urges the Roman Church to focus on offering their lives to God through Christ, not on judging one another's actions. Or spending time judging themselves as strong in faith while at the same time their brothers and sisters as weak. Or thinking their eating and Sabbath practices to be righteous and other peoples are not up to the mark. Not everyone has the same convictions and we should enjoy and celebrate the ways that other people are different to us. There's a spaciousness in this passage in that there is room for all of us. Each of us must follow the path that God has given us and though they may look different they are equally obedient. However, it's not to be taken as

a passage encouraging individualism. That anything goes. Paul is trying to get us to see the bigger context. That it's not just about us and God - but the sweep of God's saving activity in Christ and while we try and impose our own practices on other Christians, God is saving the world. Paul invites us to imitate Christ and in doing so we have a freedom; we are encouraged to change our idea of keeping the rules. God is not there to try and catch us out but what really matters is the integrity of our relationship with God, not our specific religious practices. It's not for us to judge but to remember that only God has the right to judge. Paul is urging us to not only tolerate diversity but to also welcome this diversity. If Christ welcomes all people then we too as Christians must find a way to welcome and respect each other, remembering that God has already accepted and forgiven the other. Paul asks, "Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? We will all sit before the judgment seat of God." Jesus' Sermon on the Mount sounds a similar theme: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Mt. 7:1-5).

There is a rabbinic story called 'The Rabbi's Gift.'

The story is of a monastery that had fallen upon hard times. Once a great order, but as a result of the waves of anti-monastic persecution in the seventeen and eighteen centuries and the rise of secularism in the nineteen, all its branch houses were lost and there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age. Clearly it was a dying order.

In the woods surrounding the monastery there was a little cabin that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used as a retreat. The old monks could always sense when the rabbi was visiting the cabin. 'The rabbi is in the woods again,' they would whisper as he agonized over the imminent death of his order. The abbot decided to visit the rabbi and ask for any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained all. The rabbi could only commiserate with him. 'Yes. I know how it is,' he exclaimed. 'The spirit has gone out of my people too. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore.' So, the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and spoke of deep things. When the time came for the abbot to leave, they embraced and agreed how wonderful it was to have talked after all the years. The abbot asked, 'But is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?'

'No, I am sorry,' said the rabbi. 'I have no advice to give you. But then the rabbi paused and said quietly, 'But, I do have one thing to tell you and that is that 'One of you is the Messiah.'

Returning to the monastery his fellow monks gathered and asked, 'Well, what did the rabbi say?'

'He couldn't help, but he did say just as I was leaving—that one of us was the Messiah! Maybe it's something from Jewish mysticism. I don't really know what he meant.'

As time went on, the old monks thought about the rabbi's words and began to wonder whether the rabbi's words could be true? The Messiah is one of

us and if that's the case who is it? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Or Brother Thomas – he's a holy man. Everyone knows that. Thomas is a man of light. Certainly, he couldn't have meant Brother Jonathan! He can be very grumpy. But then come to think of it, even though he is difficult he is often right. Surely not Brother Philip. He's so passive, a real nobody. But then thinking about it he is always quietly there when you most need him. And so, it went on.

As they contemplated this the monks began to treat each other with extraordinary new respect just in case one of them might be the Messiah. And on the off, off chance that they might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect too.

As people visited, they began to sense an aura of extraordinary respect that now surrounded the elderly monks and began to find this attractive and compelling. And so, returned and brought friends to spend time in that beautiful place.

Then one day one of the younger men who visited and talked with the old monks, asked if he could join them, then others followed and the monastery began to become again a thriving order – thanks to the rabbi's gift a centre of light and spirit.

Romans 14:1-12 is Paul's gift, the gift for Christians to live respectfully and celebrate each other's gifts. We are all only accountable to God, and it is only God who will judge. We are called to live to embrace the diversity and different gifts that we bring as the people who God has welcomed, people called by grace, to live in unity, to worship and to serve.

Revd Jane Wood

Intercessions

God of mercy, your love overwhelms us with your generous forgiveness. As members of the Body of Christ, help us to show that love and generosity to all. We pray especially today for the small community at Holy Cross in Owlpen as they celebrate their patronal festival and for members of Dursley PCC meeting this week.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, you hold before us a model of justice, reconciliation and restoration. We pray for all those in our world who have been victims of injustice, intolerance or prejudice and for all who work for peace and reconciliation. We continue our prayers for all in our world whose lives have been affected in any way by the current pandemic.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, your light shines brightly in the darkness; we pray for those in our local communities who are still confined to their homes; those struggling with violence or abuse and all who try to support them. We remember those young people preparing to leave home and pray for their families at this time.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, your compassion challenges us to show concern for all who suffer. Pour out your

healing love on all those who struggle with illness of any kind. We especially hold before you... Keith, John, Dave, Bryan, Bob, Pam, Sue, Graham, Marilyn, Charles, Lynne, Mary, Kevin, Chris, Jennifer, Frances, Janet, Joan and anyone known to us., confident that you know all their needs.
Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, we know that we are yours for eternity. Receive into your love all those who have died recently, amongst them Susan Martin, Ken Parfit and Maureen Critchley. Bring comfort and reassurance to all those who grieve for a loved one at this time.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Joining our prayers with the prayers of St James the Great, St Mark, St Giles, St Bartholomew and all the saints, we pray merciful Father; **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Post-communion prayer

Lord God, the source of truth and love, keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, united in prayer and the breaking of bread, and one in joy and simplicity of heart, in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

If you would like someone who is currently unwell or in particular need of prayer to be named on the weekly pew sheet, please email the parish office giving the person's name and also your name as the contact.

Pastoral Care

Home visiting is now possible in certain circumstances and following Covid guidelines. Please let Canon Michael (546459), Revd Ian Gardner (546895) or Revd Jane Wood know of those who need to be contacted or those who are in hospital and we will get in touch. Marion Kee (860364) or Pat Jones (860696) are also happy to be contacted for Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield.

Service Sheet for Worship at Home

If you are unable to join the Sunday services, please do make use of the reflective service for use at home alongside the prayers and readings for the day which can be found on the pew sheet. If you would like a copy please contact the office ewelme@parishoffice@gmail.com

Live Streaming 13th September and Information about 20th September

Somehow last week's Pew Leaflet had a problem with the live stream links.

The link for 20th September is <https://youtu.be/heWbaSUMFpE>

If this doesn't work, copy/paste the link into a web browser. Alternatively, go to YouTube and search 'Ewelme Benefice' using the search box, then select the 13th September Service.

The service on 20th September will be at 10.30 from St Mark, Woodmancote. Please note there

will be no live stream or recording – Canon Michael plans to provide an alternative link.

Tony

Next Sunday's services 20th September

8.00am Holy Communion in St James
10.00am Holy Communion in St Giles
10.30am Service of the Word in St Mark's
Please note the time of this service!

Attending services

Due to social distancing, the number of people who can attend services in church sadly has to be restricted. If you are planning to attend a service in one of the churches, please can you email Clive in the Office on ewelme@parishoffice@gmail.com or leave a message on the Office number 549280. We have been asked to keep details of attendance for 21 days for Track and Trace purposes.

Morning and Evening Prayer in St James

Morning Prayer is now being said in St James every Monday and Thursday at 9am and Evening Prayer every Monday and Thursday at 5pm. These are public services and anyone is very welcome to join these short (20 minute) said services.

Thursday Holy Communion in St James

This will re-start on **Thursday 17th September at 10am**. In order to socially distance we will need to use the pews in the central aisle. Please remember your face coverings! Many thanks to those who replied to last week's request about re-starting the service.

Churches open for private prayer

We continue to follow the same pattern of opening, leaving the buildings un-stewarded:

St James Mondays and Thursdays 10am – 5pm
St Giles Tuesdays and Fridays 10am – 3pm
St Bartholomew's Wednesdays & Saturdays 10am – 3pm

Thanks!

...to all who supported the Uley Plant and Cake Sale last Saturday. It was a lovely socially distanced event which raised over £1,100 for church funds! Very special thanks to Prue for master-minding it and for all those who helped.

Congratulations!

To Maureen and David Wood, who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary this week. Also to Nora Powell, living at The Hollies, who was 100 on 12th September. To all those in our church family who are celebrating anniversaries and birthdays at this time.

Harvest Festival

In a change to last week's notice, harvest will now be celebrated at St Giles in Uley on Sunday 4th October rather than in Nympsfield this month. The Informal Service will be at 3.30pm with more details to follow,

Harvest Festival in Dursley will be on Sunday 11th October, celebrated during the 10am service of Holy Communion.

Annual Church Meetings (APCM's)

These were postponed from April due to the Coronavirus and have now been re-scheduled.

Uley's APCM will take place in St Giles on

Sunday 27th September at 11.30am.

Dursley's APCM will take place in St James on

Sunday 11th October at 11.30am.

Please make a note of these dates. Nominations will be required for elections for churchwardens, PCC and Deanery Synod members. Nominations forms will be available in St Giles and St James or can be requested from the Parish Office ewelmeparishoffice@gmail.com or 549280

Food Bank

The Food Bank is now operating again at St James' and donations are welcome. Uley village shop and both Tesco's and Sainsbury's have food donating points which can be used. Please continue to donate.

Please note that the deadline for October's edition of 'The Messenger' is today, Sunday 13th September

Judith

Visit us on Facebook:

 Ewelme Benefice Family

Stewardship, Parish Giving Scheme, gifts and donations

Very many thanks to all members of our church community who have helped us financially by registering for the Parish Giving Scheme, increasing contributions through the Parish Giving Scheme, sending cheques to the treasurers or making bank transfers into our parish bank accounts.

These acts of generosity are really, really appreciated.

Please visit our website for quick and tax efficient online ways of giving -

<https://ewelmebenefice.co.uk/coronavirus/>.

You can also donate directly via on-line banking:

Uley account:

Barclays 20-33-83 A/C 43042057

Uley with Owlpen & Nympsfield Parochial Church Council

Uley Community Shop will take donations in sealed envelope marked 'Uley Church'

Dursley account:

Lloyds 30-98-29 A/C 02391588

Dursley PCC

Uley with Owlpen & Nympsfield Parochial Church Council

Uley Community Shop will take donations in sealed envelope marked 'Uley Church'

Dursley account:

Lloyds 30-98-29 A/C 02391588

Dursley PCC