

SEPTEMBER 6, 2020
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



Christians seek reconciliation with other Christians.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 18:15-20	Seeking reconciliation
Monday	Ezekiel 33:7-11	God's judgment seeks repentance
Tuesday	Romans 13:8-14	Love for one another
Wednesday	Exodus 12:1-14	The first Passover
Thursday	Psalms 149	A new song of praise
Friday	Galatians 5:13-15	Love fulfills the law
Saturday	Psalms 119:33-40	A prayer for understanding
Sunday	Matthew 18:21-35	A parable about forgiveness

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." **Matthew 18:21-35 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Almighty God, teach us your ways that we may live together in peace and see Jesus in the face of others. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, in the midst of violent storms and droughts we encounter in the world, we thank you for this gift of food and for those who have brought it to us. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the Lord Jesus strengthen you to love your neighbor and be at peace with all.



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SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Forgive Our Sins
As We Forgive*



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Think or tell about a time you felt badly treated by another individual or a group.
- What makes it hard to openly face conflict with someone?
- For Jesus and the church, we are to pursue others with love and grace. Does knowing this help you to resolve differences with others? Why or why not?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Matthew 18:15-20.

All relationships experience conflict, even in the church. Jesus is aware of this and lays out a plan of action: out of love, be direct. It is the way of life of the people of God announced by Paul in Romans 13:10: "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." Being right is not good enough. Having your own way is not good enough. Be loving, be merciful, and pursue what is right; face conflict through a personal conversation to resolve the issue. But if the person who has hurt you does not repent, this is not an excuse to treat them badly. Treat them as Jesus would treat a Gentile or tax collector. He pursued them with his love. Jesus is present in all our relationships, even the stressful ones (v. 20). We are to seek them out with love and mercy. When have you been wronged by the harsh treatment of another? Did you face it directly with the other person to resolve it? Did you treat them as Jesus would? Explain.

Pray: **Lord Jesus, when I am with others, remind me that you are present strengthening us to love one another anew each day. Amen.**

SERVICE

"Love your neighbor as yourself" (Romans 13:9b) sums up the commandments. Who is your neighbor? It may be the person next door or someone in the community. Loving others, even when they are different from you, fulfills the law and motivates us to action. How does knowing this motivate you to show love to a neighbor?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Next Sunday is the beginning of a new Christian education year for many congregations. Psalm 119 is a lovely text that promotes learning God's will and word. Pray for all teachers and students involved in Christian education and mention those you can by name. Conclude with: **Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I will observe it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org

SEPTEMBER 13, 2020
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



The people of God forgive.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 18:21-35	A parable about forgiveness
Monday	Genesis 50:15-21	Joseph forgives his brothers
Tuesday	Romans 14:1-12	Do not judge another
Wednesday	Exodus 14:19-31	Crossing the Red Sea
Thursday	Psalms 114	The Lord works wonders
Friday	John 8:1-11	Jesus intercedes for a woman
Saturday	Psalms 103:1-13	Thanksgiving for God's goodness
Sunday	Matthew 20:1-16	Parable of the vineyard workers

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.

Psalm 103:2-3 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Gracious God, we praise you for your desire to forgive; help us to love and forgive as we are loved and forgiven through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest; let these gifts to us be blessed. Let there be a goodly share on every table, everywhere. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the forgiveness of God bless you with steadfast love and mercy. (Psalm 103:4)



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SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

HYMN OF THE WEEK

Healer of Our Every Ill



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What does forgiveness mean to you? Give an example.
- Was there ever a time when you could not forgive someone? Explain.
- How is God's forgiveness a gift to you? to the church? to the world?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Matthew 18:21-35.

Jesus presents a very unreal story to make a very real point. In Jesus' day, each talent was worth more than 15 years of work. Therefore, one slave owed over 150,000 years of income while the other owed one hundred days of wages (a denarius was one day's wage). The differences are extreme to make the point that God's forgiveness of us is wildly out-of-this-world and wonderful. It leads the follower of Jesus Christ to sing or pray Psalm 103 that begins, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (v. 1). A concrete way to praise God is to "forgive your brother or sister from your heart" (Matthew 18:35) and do so again and again and again (v. 22). Or, as Jesus suggests, do you want to consider the consequences of not showing a little forgiveness to others? That lack of forgiveness Jesus says, would destroy your life (vv. 34-35). How can you praise God today by forgiving someone who has offended or hurt you? How does this parable help bring joy to your soul?

Pray: **Merciful God, give me faith to remember how kind and generous you are to me and to praise you by being kind and forgiving to others through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE

Genesis 50:15-21 is the story of Joseph forgiving his brothers for throwing him in a pit and selling him into slavery. Forgiving someone who has hurt you is not easy. Think of someone who needs your forgiveness. Pray for that person. Reflect on God's love and mercy shown through people like Joseph and write a note of forgiveness to that person.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Forgiveness is the theme this week in Bible readings, caring conversations, devotions, and service. Breaking a plate, saying something mean, and telling a lie are things we may not mean to do, but they happen. Think of a time when you needed to be forgiven. God forgives us again and again. Think about what this means to you. Pray the Lord's Prayer, pause as you pray, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us", then finish the prayer.



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SEPTEMBER 20, 2020
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



God is gracious and merciful.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 20:1-16	Parable of the vineyard workers
Monday	Jonah 3:10–4:11	Jonah goes to Nineveh
Tuesday	Philippians 1:21-30	What life means to Paul
Wednesday	Exodus 16:2-15	Bread from heaven
Thursday	Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45	God's faithfulness to Israel
Friday	Titus 2:11-15	God's kindness
Saturday	Psalms 145:1-8	The Lord is kind and merciful
Sunday	Matthew 21:23-32	Parable of the two sons

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **Psalm 145:8 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Gracious God, we thank you that you care for all, especially those who feel left behind, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

God of grace and mercy, we thank you for your care for us that gives us food from your fruitful creation. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the undeserved kindness of God bless you with faith and good courage now and always.



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SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

HYMN OF THE WEEK

*God Created
Heaven and Earth*

WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Think about or tell a story of how someone was kind to you.
- Has it ever been difficult for you to be kind to someone? What made it difficult?
- Is God's kindness to you a surprise or not? Explain.

DEVOTIONS

Read: Jonah 3:10–4:11.

Frankly, we don't really like God's justice. It's too supportive of people unlike us! Like Jonah, we don't want a God who is slow to anger and full of steadfast love for people we don't think deserve it, especially those we would consider our enemies. That's why Jonah ran away from God (v. 4:2). Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrians who had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. Now God told Jonah to preach repentance to the Ninevites. Jonah was afraid to do this because he knew of God's love and mercy, something he did not want showered upon his enemies. And Jonah was right; it happened, and it angered him. It's just like in Jesus' parable of the generous landowner (Matthew 20:1-16) where it seems so wrong for people who worked in the fields all day only to get the same wage as those who started at the end of the day. Is it easy or hard for you to accept God's justice where "the undeserving" receive the same generosity you receive? Explain.

Pray: **Gracious and merciful God, give me faith to love your generosity for all people, especially those who are different from me. In Jesus' name, amen.**

SERVICE

The story of the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16 is about a generous owner who paid the laborers the same amount at the end of the day even if some worked harder and longer than others. Some of the laborers grumbled. The owner asked, "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matthew 20:15). In what ways are you generous to others with what belongs to you?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

In Exodus 16:2-15 bread was provided from heaven. Prepare a meal that includes bread. Think or talk about Moses and the Israelites and how they had to learn to be patient and have faith in God to feed them daily as they traveled to the Promised Land. What does this mean for you? Before you eat, pray: **Lord, thank you for this bread you have given us to eat. Help us to never forget how you provide for us just as you did for the Israelites. Amen.**



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SEPTEMBER 27, 2020
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



God directs our ways.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 21:23-32	Parable of the two sons
Monday	Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32	God's ways are fair
Tuesday	Philippians 2:1-13	Christ shows us humility
Wednesday	Exodus 17:1-17	Water from the rock
Thursday	Psalms 78:1-4, 12-16	What God has done
Friday	James 1:19-27	Hearing and doing God's word
Saturday	Psalms 25:1-9	Prayer for guidance and help
Sunday	Matthew 21:33-46	Parable of the vineyard tenants

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

"[W]ork out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." **Philippians 2:12b-13 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Dear God, teach us to know your ways and to do them with humility and compassion for all that you have created through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Psalm 25:4)

Mealtime Prayer:

Good and gracious God, we thank you for providing for our every need, including the gift of this food; we pray through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God guide you in the way of truth and guard your life with steadfast love and faithfulness. (Psalm 25)



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SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

HYMN OF THE WEEK

We Are All One in Mission



WEEKLY MILESTONES



Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Do you ask for help sometimes when making decisions? Why or why not?
- Is there a time when you asked for God's help in making a decision? If so, tell about it.
- How does reading the Bible and having conversations with other believers help guide your life?

DEVOTIONS



Read: Philippians 2:1-13.

The Apostle Paul speaks to the church at Philippi and encourages the people to live with others with humility (vv. 3-4). He uses Christ as our model for this way of life as Christ Jesus took on our human existence and "humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death" (v. 8). With this as a guide, Paul exhorts believers to pursue the Christian life because it matters to others, to the world, and to God. Knowing how hard it is to live this life faithfully, he states, "work out our salvation in fear and trembling" (v. 12b). But this is not a fear that prevents us from acting. It is actually a sense of awe and reverence that frees us to live and act because God is with us, behind and in front of us in both our actions and our very desire to do the will of God (v. 13). It can be overwhelming to wonder how to live as a Christian. Paul encourages us to go forth with humility to love others and trust God. Think of a situation that is hard for you to know what you should do. When this happens, pray to God for wisdom and faith to act with love and humility.

Pray: **God of justice and mercy, guide our days and our deeds in the peace of Christ. Amen.**

SERVICE



In Philippians 2, Paul is asking us to imitate Jesus by being of the same mind and showing compassion, love, and humility to others. Showing interest in others by listening and praying for them is one way to be compassionate. Be mindful of listening closely to the conversations you have with others.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



Lifting our hands is one way to show praise to God. In the Old Testament there are people (like Leah and Moses) who lift their hands in praise to God. This is an ancient pose of prayer and a motion used to open a person to receiving God's blessing. Lift your hands and pray daily this week: **To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust. Amen.** (Psalm 25:1-2a)



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