

# Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet – 13<sup>th</sup> September

**This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Rev Marian Jones.**

Today, as we gather for worship, we are aware of those of you who, as yet, are not able to join the gathered community. You are the people of God where you are, and we join together to worship. Today's service reflects as closely as is possible, the service that will be held in Welshpool Methodist Church.

## Call to worship:

**Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and do not forget all his benefits.**

*Psalm 103: 1,2*

## Hymn: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#).- Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind  
forgive our foolish ways;  
re clothe us in our rightful mind;  
in purer lives thy service find,  
in deeper reverence, praise.**
- 2 In simple trust like theirs who heard  
beside the Syrian sea  
the gracious calling of the Lord,  
let us, like them, without a word  
rise up and follow thee.**

- 3 O sabbath rest by Galilee!  
O calm of hills above,  
where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
the silence of eternity,  
interpreted by love!
- 4 With that deep hush subduing all  
our words and works that drown  
the tender whisper of thy call,  
as noiseless let thy blessing fall  
as fell thy manna down.
- 5 Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
till all our strivings cease;  
take from our souls the strain and stress,  
and let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of thy peace.
- 6 Breathe through the heats of our desire  
thy coolness and thy balm;  
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,  
O still small voice of calm!

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)

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### Opening Prayer:

Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy Name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession:**

**Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought and word and deed.  
We have not loved you  
with our whole heart.  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
In your mercy,  
forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are,  
and direct what we shall be;  
that we may delight in your will  
and walk in your ways;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Declaration of God's forgiveness:**

**If we confess our sins,  
God is faithful and just  
and will forgive our sins,  
and cleanse us from  
all unrighteousness.  
Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Prayer for today:**

**God our Redeemer,  
who called your Church to witness  
that you were in Christ  
reconciling the world to yourself:  
help us so to proclaim the good news of your love  
that all who hear it may be reconciled to you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **A reading from the Gospel according to St Matthew, Chapter 18: 21 – 35**

To listen to this reading, by David Suchet from BibleGateway in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

**Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’**

**Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.**

**‘Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.**

**‘At this the servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.**

**‘But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded.**

**‘His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.”**

**‘But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.**

**‘Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.**

**‘This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.’**

## Reflection

If I walk through the vestry on a Sunday morning when the stewards are counting the collection, I do my best not to distract or disturb them. I remember those times when I've been counting and, having lost my place, had to start all over again! Depending on the translation, Jesus says we are to forgive 'seventy seven times' or even 'seventy times seven'. Four hundred and ninety incidents to remember – I'd surely lose count – unless I made a note each time – and this is forgiving just one person. What about all the others I have to maintain a count for? Said like that, it sounds just ridiculous, and yet . . . yet – have you ever uttered 'if he does that just once more' as a threat?

Jesus had been having a conversation with his disciples about reconciliation, about bringing together those followers of Jesus who disagree and what is to happen if they persist in their behaviour. Peter, the one who is nearly always ready to speak up and ask questions, wants to know how often and for how long they have to put up with a person's disruptive behaviour – and the answer seems to be 'who's counting?'

Was Peter remembering the story of Cain and Abel, where Cain killed Abel and, when he was asked where Abel was, Cain answered: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' And the Lord said: 'Whoever kills Cain shall suffer sevenfold vengeance.' In spite of what Cain had done, his life was to be spared. Was seven times enough? asked Peter.

Perhaps Jesus is reminding Peter, instead, of the story of Lamech, Noah's father. He, too, killed a man and the story in Genesis reads: 'If Cain is to be avenged seven times over, then for Lamech it will be seventy-seven times!'

Even that isn't enough for Jesus, so he tells one of his stories.

In the prison where I worked, on the Young Offenders' Unit, we had a lovely, bright lad who had been sent to us because the prison was 'state of the art' where everything was computerised. Even though I carried keys to open every door in case of computer failure, when I reached a

door it would spring open because the control tower, via the cameras, would see me and unlock the door remotely.

Let's call him Carl, was an excellent lock picker and safe breaker. I'm sure he could have had a really good job with Chubb or Yale if he'd been strong enough to resist the influences of the wrong crowd. He kept himself to himself, didn't get involved in fights but he did have this strange compulsion to have a go when he saw a lock. He was in a shared cell with one of the less friendly prisoners. They didn't get on, yet in a strange kind of way, they looked after each other.

One afternoon, when his cellmate was asleep, Carl decided to have a go at the lock on the cell door with not much more than a comb and a piece of wire from a spiral bound notebook that he shouldn't have had!

It was a challenge and, he told me later, he wanted to get away from his cell mate. He knew he couldn't get anywhere; he'd still be on the prison wing even if he did manage to open the cell door. The thought that stopped him was realising that if he got out of the cell, the other lad would get out too and Carl wasn't going to let that happen! He couldn't set himself free without freeing his cellmate.

It is in forgiving that we ourselves are forgiven.

Not one of us can get through life without being hurt, sometimes by the Christian community that Matthew is writing for. The apostle is outlining how we are to live together in this community – when cruel words are spoken in the heat of the moment, when small things get blown up out of all proportion, as well as when devastating things are said and done. The danger is that bitterness, anger and resentment creep in, like a wound that festers, and we destroy ourselves. And we're not yet perfect, we hurt others, too.

Even Paul could write to the Christians in Rome: 'I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.'

A few months ago, we were all advised to sing 'Happy birthday to you' twice through as we washed our hands. It wasn't long afterwards that the church was encouraging us, instead, to wash our hands for as long

as it takes to say The Lord's Prayer. If we used the less popular 'modern' version, which we will do this morning, then we'll be saying:

**'Forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us'.**

Or, in the words of fifth Beatitude, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy'.

Yet it seems that, even for Jesus, there are exceptions. In that same conversation, he issued a warning that whoever harms one of the little ones would be better having a millstone around his neck and be drowned in the open sea.

Early one morning a few weeks ago, I was listening to the Today programme and heard a Muslim woman, Amber Rashid, a person from another faith, worshipping the same God, describe how she felt as she reflected on the indiscriminate killing of her husband and her 21 year old son in the murders that took place in a mosque in New Zealand over a year ago 'I feel sorry for the attacker because he had hate in his heart. We have a heart full of love. I forgive him, despite what has happened.' She went on to say that she holds no grudges against him and that she wants to meet that act of hatred with compassion and love. Not a Christian, yet the same kingdom values are echoed.

Rarely is forgiveness an easy option yet it is part of the cost of discipleship. And we're expected to forgive even if the offender isn't sorry. How tough is that? Maybe it is easier than seeking out those we've hurt and asking their forgiveness . . .

Where would we be, I wonder, if everyone played the numbers game and kept count? What if God. . .

**'Forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us'.**

It is in forgiving that we ourselves are forgiven.

### **Prayers of Intercession:**

**God, most gracious and most holy,  
grant us the help of your Spirit  
as we pray for the Church and the world.**

We pray for the Church in every land . . .  
for the church to which we belong and for other local churches  
that we may worship and serve you  
with reverence and joy.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for the peoples of the world . . .  
and for the leaders of the nations . . .  
that all may work together for freedom, justice and peace.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who are ill or distressed . . .  
for the lonely and the bereaved . . .  
and for those in any other need or trouble . . .  
that they may be comforted and sustained.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father, we remember before you  
all your servants who have died in the faith of Christ . . .  
We pray that we too may lead faithful and godly lives in this world,  
and finally share with all the saints in everlasting joy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your Name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins,**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory  
are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

**The Peace:**

**We are the Body of Christ.**

**In the one Spirit  
we were all baptized into one body.**

**Let us therefore keep the unity of the Spirit  
in the bond of peace.**

**In the silence, we call to mind those in need of God's peace.**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

**We praise you, gracious Father,  
our Maker and Sustainer,  
for you created the heavens and the earth  
and formed us in your own image.**

**Though we sinned against you,  
your love for us was constant,  
and you sent your Son Jesus Christ  
to be the Saviour of the world.**

**Sharing our human nature,  
he was born of Mary and baptized in the Jordan.  
He proclaimed your kingdom, by word and deed,  
and was put to death upon the cross.**

**You raised him from the dead;  
you exalted him in glory;**

and through him you have sent your Holy Spirit,  
calling us to be your people, a community of faith.

And so, with angels and archangels

and all the choirs of heaven,

we join in the triumphant hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,**

**God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Holy God, we praise you**

**that on the night in which he was betrayed**

**our Saviour Christ took bread**

**and gave you thanks.**

**He broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,**

**'Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.**

**Do this in remembrance of me.'**

**After supper, he took the cup of wine,**

**gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,**

**'Drink from it, all of you.**

**This is my blood of the new covenant,**

**poured out for all people**

**for the forgiveness of sins.**

**Do this in remembrance of me.'**

**Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection,**

**and proclaiming his eternal sacrifice,**

we offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving,  
as we declare the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

O Lord Jesus Christ, since I cannot now receive You in bread and wine, I humbly pray that You would come spiritually to my soul.

*Silence may be kept*

Come, Lord Jesus, come and cleanse me,  
heal me, strengthen me  
and unite me to Yourself,  
now and for evermore. Amen.

### **Hymn: Fill thou my life, O Lord my God**

To listen to the tune in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1      **Fill thou my life, O Lord my God,  
in every part with praise,  
that my whole being may proclaim  
thy being and thy ways.**
  
- 2      **Not for the lip of praise alone  
nor e'en the praising heart  
I ask, but for a life made up  
of praise in every part:**
  
- 3      **Praise in the common things of life,  
its goings out and in;  
praise in each duty and each deed,  
however small and mean.**

- 4** Fill every part of me with praise;  
let all my being speak  
of thee and of thy love, O Lord,  
poor though I be and weak.
- 5** So shalt Thou, Lord, from me, e'en me,  
receive the glory due;  
and so shall I begin on earth  
the song for ever new.
- 6** So shall no part of day or night  
from sacredness be free;  
but all my life, in every step,  
be fellowship with thee.

Horatius N. Bonar (1808–1889)

The blessing of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
remain with us always.

**Amen.**

Let us go in peace in the power of the Spirit  
to live and work to God's praise and glory.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**