**Saginaw First Free Methodist Church**

**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**September 13, 2020**



*“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?'.” (Matthew 18:32-33)*

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*The mission of Saginaw First Free Methodist Church is to be faithful to God and to make known to all people everywhere God’s call to wholeness in Jesus Christ.*

**Prelude**

**\*\*Greeting/Announcements**

**\*Call to Worship** (*spoken responsively*)

L:     God is leading people into a safe, new life

**P:     God is rolling away the obstacles of oppression**

L:     God has welcomed those who are different from us

**P:     We will not judge our neighbor or speak poorly of them**

L:     We do not live or die to ourselves

**P:     If we live, we live to the Lord, if we die, we die to the Lord**

L:     God has had pity on you and has been gracious unto you

**P:     We will be merciful and have patience with all**

**\*Opening Hymn:** “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” #20 (vv.1-2,4)

**Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!**

**O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation**

**All ye who hear; now to his temple draw near**

**Join me in glad adoration**

**Praise to the Lord, who o’er all things so wondrously reigneth**

**Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth**

**Has thou not seen how thy desires all have been**

**Granted in what He ordaineth?**

**Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!**

**All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him**

**Let the amen sound from his people again**

**Gladly forever adore Him**

**\*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer**

L: Almighty God and ruler of all creation, we are in awe as we remember how you’ve dealt mercifully with your people. You have led people into a promise of new life, a life of abundant living. You have judged kindly with us also. Teach us to also be kind and merciful, to empower others to live liberated lives. Let our truth be not malicious, as we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples…

**P: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father​**

**And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.**

**As it was in the beginning​**

**Is now and ever shall be**

**World without end**

**Amen. Amen**

**First Scripture Lesson:** Exodus 14:19-31

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.

The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic.

He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.”

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.

But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

**Prayer of Confession**

L: We often pass judgment on our Christian family. We quarrel with those who live and think differently than us. We are offended when others ignore our opinions or recommendations. We tend to respond harshly and gossip. We also act maliciously towards them. Let us learn God’s way of love…

**P:** **Gracious God, you teach us to forgive because vengeance kills. Harboring bitterness leads to death for our neighbor and ourselves. If we do not forgive, we are bound to gossip, slander, and lash out in anger. We will be violent. Resentment eats away at our souls. It reminds us of the sin that remains in our hearts. Help us to learn the ways of peace. Guide us in lives that create stronger communities. Let us be patient with ourselves and each other as you have always been. Amen.**

**Affirmation of Faith:** Psalm 114

**P:** **When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion. The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. Why is it, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs? Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.**

**\*Hymn of Affirmation:** “Bless His Holy Name” #27

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And all that is within me, bless his holy name!

He has done great things,

He has done great things,

He has done great things,

Bless his holy name!

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And all that is within me, bless his holy name!

**Second Scripture Lesson:** Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling 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 judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.

Who are you to pass judgment 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 honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor 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 judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment 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.

**Special Music:** Micki Marin

**Passing of the Peace**

**Prayers of the People**

L: Lord in Your Mercy…

**P: Hear our prayer.**

**Gospel Lesson**: 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.”

**Sermon:** “Do You Love Your Neighbor?”

**Prayer of Response**

**\*Hymn of Response:** “How Firm a Foundation” #689 (vv.1-2,6)

**How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord**

**Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word**

**What more can he say than to you he has said**

**To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled**

**Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed**

**For I am your God, and will still give you aid**

**I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand**

**Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand**

**The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose**

**I will not, I will not desert to his foes**

**That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake**

**I'll never, no never, no never forsake**

**Invitation of Offering**

L:God has provided ways that lead us all to new Life. We have made it closer to safe pastures. Others still need us to remove their obstacles. Give out of your blessed hearts, as we collect this morning’s tithes and offerings.

**\*Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow**

**Praise Him, all creatures here below**

**Praise Him above, ye heavenly host**

**Praise Father Son, and Holy Ghost.**

**Amen.**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Hymn**: “Joy Unspeakable” #423 (vv.1,3-4)

**I have found His grace is all complete**

**He supplieth every need**

**While I sit and learn at Jesus’ feet**

**I am free, yes, free indeed**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory**

**Full of glory, full of glory**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory**

**Oh, the half has never yet been told**

**I have found that hope so bright and clear**

**Living in the realm of grace**

**Oh, the Savior’s presence is so near**

**I can see His smiling face**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory**

**Full of glory, full of glory**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory**

**Oh, the half has never yet been told**

**I have found the joy no tongue can tell**

**How its waves of glory roll**

**It is like a great o’erflowing well**

**Springing up within my soul**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory**

**Full of glory, full of glory**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory**

**Oh, the half has never yet been told**

**\*Benediction**

L: The God of mercy has forgiven you of your debt. God has equipped you to forgive also. Remember the weaker and poorer among you, and deal kindly and mercifully with them. Remember what God has done for you, as you go in peace to love and serve. Amen.