

Our song to sing or to read: Make Me A Channel of Your Peace

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Refrain: O Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light
And where there's sadness, ever joy. **Refrain**

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving of ourselves that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

*Based on an anonymous prayer c 1900
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A Closing Prayer

As the Lord has forgiven us out of His great love
go from here willing to forgive those who have hurt us.
And may the blessing 'God be with us'
remain with us always.
Amen

With thanks to Kylie Field for preparing today's reflection



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Church in a Bag
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Dubbo Uniting Church



Call to worship

As we open our bag it becomes a time
for permitting ourselves to let go and seek forgiveness.
It is a time that Jesus invites us to forgive with all our hearts.
Amen

Preparation

Lord we come before you
stilling our minds, opening our hearts, opening our minds.
Lord we are here to worship you from our homes.
Would you please meet us through your spirit
teach us through your word
show us where we need to change
and give us all we need to serve you
in the world that you have given us.
Amen



Reading Matthew 18:21-35 – Forgiving Reflection

Forgiveness. As a human, this is just one of many things that we need to do. But it is one of the hardest.

Picture this:

Peter: Jesus, how many times should I forgive? Seven times?

Jesus: (Gesturing higher) More than that.

Peter: Seventeen times?

Jesus: Way off

Peter: Rightio then – twenty-seven times then?

Jesus: Keep going

Peter: Are you for real? Thirty-seven times?

Jesus: Try seventy times seven.

Peter: That is just ridiculous! Impossible! Extravagant!

Martin Luther King Jnr said:

Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude.



What does it feel like when we do not, cannot, or will not forgive? What does it feel like when someone will not forgive you? What happens when forgiveness does not happen? How do you feel about that other person ... or yourself? If we flip this, how does it feel to forgive and to be forgiven?

The act of forgiveness in the Kingdom of Heaven is super hard to hear. As much as we exercise what we are taught during our Christian journey of faith it is hard to accept or imagine the endless and immeasurable nature of forgiveness that Jesus tells us about. Forgiveness is part and parcel of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a constant. It is not optional. It is not a choice. We want to be in Peter's heart, the heart of his question.

This passage set in motion painful, deep, tragic memories for the people that would not forgive. It put in place waiting, reminders, pondering and holding back.

At least now this passage is now making us rethink the purpose of forgiveness in our lives. When we need it. When we give it. When to hold back. When to ask ourselves a question - *what we are waiting for?*

The final truth of this exchange between Peter and Jesus is that as much as we try to control or place controls over when, where and why we forgive others, we first need to forgive ourselves. That is the hardest of things to hear. We have all had moments when we question whether we are worthy of being forgiven. Offering forgiveness, we must. Believing it, we must. When we can forgive but not forget, that is not forgiveness from our hearts.

To forgive does not mean we condone what was done to us. To forgive does not mean we permit or deny justice. To forgive means to refuse to let what happened destroy us and estrange us from God and from one another. It demands hard work and careful observation, but it is the way to a full life to discipleship and to God. **Jesus invites us to forgive from our hearts.**