



Introduction

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✙ Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people,
turning us from our sin to live for you alone.

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin,
receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness
of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.
We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.
Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,
so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin,
and made us alive together with Christ. By grace we have been saved.

In the name of ✙ Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit,
that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn ELW # 783 / LBW # 470 *Praise and Thanks and Adoration*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

- ¹Do not be provoked by evildoers; do not be jealous of those who do wrong.
²**For they shall soon wither like the grass, and like the green grass fade away.**
³Put your trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and find safe pasture.
⁴**Take delight in the LORD, who shall give you your heart's desire.**
⁵Commit your way to the LORD; put your trust in the LORD, and see what God will do.
⁶**The LORD will make your vindication as clear as the light
and the justice of your case like the noonday sun.**
⁷Be still before the LORD and wait patiently.
Do not be provoked by the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in evil schemes.
⁸**Refrain from anger, leave rage alone; do not be provoked; it leads only to evil.**
⁹For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD shall possess the land.
¹⁰**In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
even if you search out their place, they will not be there.**
¹¹But the lowly shall possess the land; they will delight in abundance of peace.
³⁹**But the deliverance of the righteous comes from you, O LORD;
you are their stronghold in time of trouble.**
⁴⁰You, O LORD, will help them and rescue them;
you will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them,
because in you they seek refuge.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

In the Apostles' Creed, we speak of the "resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Using the metaphor of a planted seed and the story of Adam, Paul preaches passionately about the mystery of following Christ's perfect life into eternity.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

These days, whenever we turn on the television news or read the newspaper headlines, it seems that we learn about one murder or other heinous crime or trial or lawsuit after another. It seems that there are no limits to our collective greed, anger, or misdeeds. The news reports are full of people harming one another both physically and financially.

In today's first lesson, we read about Joseph – that younger son of Jacob, who had been sold as a slave by his older brothers because they found him irritating. Joseph endured many trials, including lengthy imprisonment, before his God-given gift for interpreting dreams led Egypt's pharaoh to free him and to entrust his entire kingdom to Joseph's shrewd management.

When his brothers arrived in Egypt, looking for assistance in the midst of a widespread famine, Joseph recognized them and identified himself to them. They were rightly frightened because they had treated him so poorly years before. But Joseph, who had been so blessed by God, forgave them and treated them generously.

This text shows us surprising things: abiding love, surprising grace, willing forgiveness, and abundant generosity. For those of us who might still believe that the Old Testament is harsh and only the New Testament is filled with love, grace, forgiveness, and generosity, this passage can come as a tremendous surprise!

Apparently, while some might have remembered the stories of Joseph and his brothers, over the years, the example of Joseph's great love, and other stories like it, lost their impact, and the people strayed far from God's desire for them to live in harmony with one another.

Today we find a strong connection between this Old Testament passage from Genesis and the gospel text from Luke which tells what Jesus came to teach his disciples – then and now - about living as God's beloved children.

Jesus was really just beginning to teach his new disciples what it means to follow him, as he began to emphasize love, forgiveness, grace, and generosity. A way of life that involves loving those we find most unlovable, simply because we know that God has already showered us with love.

We are called to be merciful because God has already been merciful to us. We are called to be part of God's movement of turning the world upside down.

And Jesus manages to teach this without putting it in the negative. Rather than a list of 'do nots,' Jesus says it very simply:

Love your enemies
Do good even to those who hate you
Bless those who curse you
Pray for those who abuse you
Give to those who ask
Do to others as you want them to do to you.

Not because it is easy, but because it is what God calls us to do. In doing so, we become part of the movement of God's kingdom in the world; part of turning things upside down, sharing God's love, and restoring God's justice. We truly see and participate in the kingdom of God coming near.

This is not easy, but it is meaningful, powerful work. I read these words this week:

"Jesus is not describing what is but what should be. All the revenge plots, suicide bombings, and broken relationships would be done away with if the human race not only heard Jesus' words but really listened and obeyed."

(Melinda A. Quivik, **Feasting on the Gospels--Luke, Volume 1: A Feasting on the Word Commentary** . Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.)

We also need to remind ourselves that our actions are not based on our feelings of love toward others, but our love is an action in itself, motivated by our desire to please and serve God.

If you remember those newscasts that we watch – have you noticed how many of them feature human interest stories? The half hour which began by showing the worst things that people can do to one another often closes with at least a few moments reminding us that people who care about one another still exist and still make a difference.

May we all remember that we are called to open our hearts and our arms to one another in love. We have been given hearts, not of stone, but filled with God's love, so that we can share it with others.

May we find joy and peace in loving others, even when they seem unlovable, because that is exactly what God has created us to do. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 712/ LBW # 423

Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

A brief silence.

You teach us to love our neighbors and enemies alike. Encourage your church to follow the leading of your love, especially when it is risky or difficult. Help us to show mercy just as we have first received mercy. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Nurture fields that lie dormant, resting until it is time to bloom again. Bless farmers and all who cultivate fields and urban gardens. Give favorable weather for planting. Bring forth from buried seed an abundant harvest, and guard against famine and disease. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Look upon our world with mercy, that we delight in an abundance of peace. Protect all whose lives are marred by war and civil unrest. Release political prisoners and amplify the voices that challenge us to seek forgiveness and pursue nonviolence. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your people cry out for mercy. Console hearts that long for forgiveness. Mend broken relationships. Heal bodies that suffer chronic pain or illness. Strengthen and deliver all whose spirits are troubled especially those we name now.

God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You bind us together into one family. Teach us to forgive one another and to resolve conflicts with humility and patience. Bless families of all shapes and sizes, and show love to those who are lonely or grieving. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We praise you for the saints who have inherited the fullness of your kingdom. As you have raised them to imperishable and eternal life, sustain us in faith by the promise of resurrection. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 707/ LBW # 424 (vs 1-3, 5)

Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.