

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And welcome to morning prayers. Please stand, as you are able, for our responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book. This morning, we'll be reading Psalm 57, found on page 29.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in thee my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of thy wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.

Congregation:

I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let thy glory be over all the earth.

Congregation:

They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down.

Laurie Sedgwick:

They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves.

Congregation:

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Awake, my soul. Awake, O harp and lyre. I will awake the dawn.

Congregation:

I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to thee among the nations.

Laurie Sedgwick:

For thy steadfast love is great to the heavens, thy faithfulness to the clouds.

Congregation:

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let thy glory be over all the earth.

Choir:

(singing)

Kevin Bryant:

Good morning, saints.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Kevin Bryant:

What a blessing it is to be in the house of the Lord. And it's so good to see each and every one of you.

In the Lord's Prayer, we recite, forgive us, our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, and we really need to think about what we're saying. Some of us have not even learned how to love our friends, let alone our frenemies. We allow petty issues and differences to divide us. And in these times, I've seen people, who friends, separate through political divides, and different other ideologies, and stress from COVID.

Now, all of us have been wronged by other people. Forgiveness is not saying, "Oh, that's okay. It didn't matter." Forgiveness says, "It wasn't okay. It did matter. And what you did hurt me deeply, but I choose to forgive you, anyway." Forgiveness does not live in denial. It faces the reality of the deed done, and chooses forgiveness over revenge and continued bitterness. We often hear people say, forgive and forget. You don't have to forget to forgive someone. Real forgiveness remembers everything, and still chooses to forgive. The memory of the event or situation is still there, but the bitterness is what is forgotten and left behind. To forget, some of the situations that people have faced, would force them to be in unhealthy denial. Real love, really remembers and feels the full force of the pain, and still extends forgiveness to the offender. There is no love without forgiveness, and there is no forgiveness without love. Having that kind of forgiveness in your life is what it means to live like Jesus. Amen.

Please let us bow our heads in prayer.

Lord, allow your healing hand to heal us. Touch our souls with your compassion, so that we may have compassion for others. Touch our hearts with your courage, so that we may have infinite love for everyone. Touch our minds with your wisdom, so that our mouths may all always proclaim your praise. Teach us to reach out to you in times of need. Lord, heal, not only our bodies, but also heal our spirit, so that we may serve others with all of our strength. Touch gently this life, which you have created, now and forever. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Kevin Bryant:

Bless you all.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And now, please stand as you are able, so we can recite together the prayer that Jesus taught us saying,

Congregation:

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

Laurie Sedgwick:

And now let us sing to him, Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow, number 154 in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing)

Laurie Sedgwick:

God of steadfast love, light of the blind, and liberator of the oppressed, we see your holy purpose in the tender compassion of Jesus, who calls us into new and living friendship with you. May we, who take shelter in the shadow of your wings, be filled with the grace of his tender caring. May we, who stumble in selfish darkness, see your glory in the light of his self-giving. We ask this through him, whose suffering is victorious, Jesus Christ, our savior. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.