

**Havant. Thursday after Trinity 10. 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021 Yr 1**

Josh 3.7–11, 13–17 / Mt 18.21-19.1

One of the criticisms often levelled against today's form of the Eucharist, more or less according to the Book of Common Prayer, is that it is very light on the resurrection and very heavy on sin. It may of course be true that the balance has sometimes swung too much in that direction, but it can equally swing too far the other way. These days, the Church is more likely to ask what people feel and want and to tailor its teaching accordingly than to call Christians to objective standards of behaviour and belief. Because we have a weakened sense of sin, we also have a weakened sense of forgiveness and of gratitude for having been forgiven.

In the light therefore of this morning's gospel about God's compassion for sinners and therefore the compassion we should show to those in debt to us, I want to encourage you to do that most unfashionable thing which is to face honestly and openly your own resistance to God, as it is only when we appreciate the hugeness of what God has done for us that we shall understand what it means to pray, *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.*

I cannot think of better words in which to offer this encouragement than those of the BCP itself. One of the exhortations too infrequently used goes like this:

*DEARLY beloved in the Lord, ye that mind to come to the holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, must consider how Saint Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; (for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us;) so is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily. For then we are guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour; we eat and drink our own damnation, not considering the Lord's Body; we kindle God's wrath against us; we provoke him to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death. Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins past; have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries. And above all things ye must give most*

*humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man; who did humble himself, even to the death upon the Cross, for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death; that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life. And to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us; he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. To him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, let us give (as we are most bounden) continual thanks; submitting ourselves wholly to his holy will and pleasure, and studying to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. Amen.*

Knowing ourselves then to be the utterly unworthy recipients of God's forgiveness, we have no alternative but to show the same mercy to others. Without "as we forgive them that trespass against us", "forgive us our trespasses" sounds hollow in the extreme.