

Sermon and Readings 16th Sunday After Pentecost 13th September 2026

Exodus 14.19-31

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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.' ²⁶ 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.' ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ³⁰ Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ 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.

Psalms 114

¹ When Israel came out of Egypt:
and the house of Jacob from among a people of an alien tongue,
² Judah became his sanctuary:
and Israel his dominion.
³ The sea saw that, and fled:
Jordan was driven back.

⁴ The mountains skipped like rams:
and the little hills like young sheep.
⁵ What ailed you, O sea, that you fled:
O Jordan, that you were driven back?
⁶ You mountains, that you skipped like rams:
and you little hills like young sheep?
⁷ Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord:
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
⁸ Who turned the rock into a pool of water:
and the flint-stone into a welling spring.

Romans 14.1-14

¹ Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgement 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also, those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God. ⁷ We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸ 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. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' ¹² So then, each of us will be accountable to God. ¹³ Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another but resolve instead never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of another. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

Matthew 18.21-35

²¹ ...Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³ 'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ 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." ²⁹ Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ 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. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. ³⁵ 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

Have you ever had one of those moments when your perspective on life suddenly shifted? A moment you can look back on and say, "That was when something changed"?

I've had a couple of those moments in my life—times when an experience, a conversation, or an unexpected event caused me to see things differently. Sometimes the change was immediate; at other times, I only recognised its significance much later.

These moments remind us that life does not always unfold as we expect. Sometimes God uses the unexpected to open our eyes, challenge our

assumptions, and invite us to see our lives—and the people around us—from a new perspective.

For me, however, the most obvious and memorable moment came in 2006. It was at the end of my Cursillo weekend when, perhaps for the first time, I truly realised that I was loved—and that I was allowed to be loved.

That moment changed something deep within me. It was the moment when God became first in my life, above all things and all people.

But that didn't mean I suddenly had everything worked out. I was still new to Christianity, and there was a lot to navigate. There were times when I wondered whether I was truly saved. I worried that perhaps I hadn't done something right, hadn't believed enough, prayed enough, or somehow had missed something important.

And then came this extraordinary sense of assurance. It was almost like a flood washing over me—the realisation that my salvation did not depend upon me getting everything right. It depended upon the grace and love of God.

John Wesley famously described an experience in which he felt his heart “strangely warmed.” I understand something of what he meant, because I experienced something like that myself.

To this day, that experience remains a grounding point in my journey of faith. When doubts arise, when life becomes difficult, or when God seems distant, I can look back to that moment and remember: **God met me there. God loved me then. And God loves me still.**

And with that assurance came something else—an overwhelming sense of the vastness and abundance of God's grace.

At first, it felt intensely personal: *God's grace is for me. I am loved. I am forgiven. I belong.*

But gradually I began to understand something much bigger.

If God's grace is really grace, then it cannot stop with me.

The same God who loves me loves the person beside me. God loves the person I find difficult. God loves the outsider, the forgotten, the wounded and the rejected. God even loves those whom I might struggle to love.

God's grace is not scarce. There is no shortage of it. It is abundant, overflowing and offered to everyone.

And perhaps that is one of the great shifts that happens in our Christian journey: we move from simply asking, **"Does God really love me?"** to discovering, **"If God loves me this much, how can I help others discover that they are loved too?"**

And this is where grace becomes more than something we receive. **Grace becomes something we live.**

When we talk about leadership and grace, we can easily misunderstand what it means to lead graciously. Grace is not simply being nice, avoiding conflict, or allowing people to do whatever they want.

Grace can have boundaries. Grace can speak the truth. Grace can challenge what is wrong. But grace does so without humiliating, condemning or writing people off.

To lead with grace is to become a **conduit of the grace of God**—allowing the grace we have received to flow through us into the lives of others.

We are forgiven so that we might forgive.

We are reconciled to God so that we might become people of reconciliation.

We are loved so that we might love.

And that can be difficult, because reconciliation does not mean pretending that nothing happened. It doesn't mean ignoring hurt or allowing harmful behaviour to continue. Sometimes grace says, "This is not acceptable." Sometimes grace requires strong boundaries.

But grace also refuses to declare another person beyond redemption.

Jesus calls us to keep the door of reconciliation open. Again and again.

We don't give up on people simply because they make mistakes. We don't expect everyone to grow at the same speed or in the same way. We recognise that God is still at work in them—just as God is still at work in us.

Perhaps that is one of the greatest lessons my own experience of God's grace has taught me.

When I first experienced that overwhelming assurance of God's love, it was deeply personal: **God loves me. God forgives me. God's grace is for me.**

But grace was never meant to end with me.

The grace that flows **to us** is meant to flow **through us**.

Into our families.

Into our churches.

Into our communities.

And especially into those difficult relationships where forgiveness and reconciliation seem almost impossible.

Because without grace, reconciliation is incredibly difficult.

But with grace, there is always the possibility of another step, another conversation, another beginning.

Perhaps the question for us, then, is not simply, **“Have I received the grace of God?”**

Perhaps the deeper question is:

“Having received such extraordinary grace, how am I allowing that grace to flow through me to others?”

Amen.