



Worship Service Theme: Repentance and Forgiveness
First Sunday of Lent

Helpful Elements:
Purple table covering (Lenten Season)

Welcome: Welcome! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today is the first Sunday of Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter, a time of reflecting on our humanity and God's glory. We use the color purple during Lent as the color of penance and pardon. As we begin Lent, today we'll be looking at the themes of **repentance and forgiveness**.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 4

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

First Reading: This is from Psalm 51, a psalm of repentance:

⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Oh, How I love Jesus, p. 7

Second reading: This is from the fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel (43-48):

⁴³[Jesus taught his followers:] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. For God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if

you greet only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect [*meaning holy*], as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 8

His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 9

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 10

Interactive Homily: Let’s think a bit about repentance and forgiveness.

- What do you think repentance means?
 - To feel and say you’re sorry, to ask for pardon.
 - Literal definition, “to turn,” to change your direction; turning away from evil *and* turning towards good.
- How does it help a situation when someone apologizes, or when you apologize to someone?
 - Brings calmness, understanding, peace, resolution.
- What about forgiveness – what does that mean to you?
 - Giving someone grace, mercy; letting go of the right to revenge.
- What sorts of things require forgiveness in our lives?
 - Grudges, grievances, insults, physical harm, emotional harm, neglect.
- Is forgiveness the same as forgetting?
 - No – it doesn’t mean the wrong didn’t happen or didn’t matter.
- Is forgiveness weakness? Is it easy?
 - No; it actually takes great strength to forgive.
- How does it feel when someone forgives you?
- How do you feel when you’re really able to forgive someone else?
 - Freedom; a burden is lifted.
- The Lord’s Prayer includes specifics about forgiveness: “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”
 - According to this prayer, who forgives us for our wrongdoing? God!
 - Interestingly, in the Bible, immediately after Jesus gives his followers the Lord’s prayer, Jesus *expands on only one part* of his prayer: forgiveness! “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their

trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt. 6:14-15)

- What is a heart like that can’t forgive? Hard, cold, like a stone.
- That kind of heart *can’t give or receive* forgiveness.
- I wonder how you think we can practice forgiveness in our day-to-day lives?
- Let’s pray silently for a moment for the strength and grace to forgive as we have been forgiven.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: 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, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

He’s Got the Whole World, p. 12

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

Third Reading: Quotes on Forgiveness

When somebody you’ve wronged forgives you, you’re spared the dull throb of a guilty conscience.

When you forgive somebody who has wronged you, you’re spared bitterness and wounded pride.

For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each other’s presence. –author and minister Frederick Buechner

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. –Martin Luther King, Jr.

If you are bitter, you are like a dry leaf that you can just squash, and you can get blown away by the wind. There is much more wisdom in forgiveness. –South African singer-songwriter Vusi Mahlasela

Forgiveness is not always easy. At times, forgiving the person who inflicted the pain feels more painful than the wound we suffered. And yet, there is no peace without forgiveness. –spiritual teacher Marianne Williamson

God seems to put a higher priority on forgiveness than on justice. We don't sing "Amazing Justice"; we sing "Amazing Grace". Does that mean I think a holy God would oppose the execution of a convicted murderer...? I don't know; I'm still wrestling with that question. But I do know this: Justice didn't do a thing to heal me. Forgiveness did." –trauma survivor Debbie Morris, *Forgiving the Dead Man Walking*

The Golden Deer spoke, "I believe all the moral laws can be summed this way: Give compassion to all creatures and be quick to forgive. For compassion and forgiveness brings you freedom and peace within your soul and to the creatures and people to whom you give such gifts."¹ –Buddhist Jakata (moral tale)

Hymns:

Amazing Grace, p. 16

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

Fourth Reading: A Lighthearted Story About Forgiveness ☺

A young man named John received a parrot as a gift. The parrot had a bad attitude and an even worse vocabulary. Every word out of the bird's mouth was rude, obnoxious and laced with profanity.

John tried and tried to change the bird's attitude by consistently saying only polite words, playing soft music and anything else he could think of to "clean up" the bird's speech. Finally, John was fed up and he yelled at the parrot. The parrot yelled back. John shook the parrot and the parrot got angrier and even more rude. John, in desperation, grabbed the bird and put the bird in the freezer.

¹ <http://tsl.org/family/2013/10/the-golden-deer-teaches-forgiveness/>

For a few minutes the parrot squawked and kicked and screamed. Then suddenly there was total quiet. Not a peep was heard for over a minute. Fearing that he'd hurt the parrot, John quickly opened the door to the freezer. The parrot calmly stepped out onto John's outstretched arms and said "I believe I may have offended you with my rude language and actions. I'm sincerely sorry for my faults and I fully intend to do everything I can to correct my rude behavior. Please forgive me!"

John was stunned at this change in the parrot's attitude. As John was about to ask the parrot what had made him change so dramatically, the bird spoke up, very softly, and said, "May I ask what the chicken in the freezer did?"²

Hymns:

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, p. 19

This Little Light of Mine, p. 20

[sing more or fewer songs to fill out the time]

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word "Lord")

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30

² <http://www.metaspoon.com/parrot-freezer-punishment-joke/?cat=stories#Uido05rhb5J0aqtg.99>