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Forgive us for when we walk the easy road, when we dismiss those unlike us, and reject our kin, your children. Forgive us when we choose to hold onto anger or for not seeking new ways to connect despite difficult circumstances. God of us all, bring us in, forgive us and renew us, and change our hearts to reflect your love. Amen.**  Silent Prayers of Confession   Words of Assurance (responsive) Leader: The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, never-ending and beyond our human understanding. **People: Thanks be to God who forgives us, loves us, and sets us free once again to live as Christ calls us. Amen.**   The Peace Leader: The peace of Christ be with you! **People: And also with you!** (You may greet those around you)   The Proclamation of the Word Prayer of Illumination   Generous God, you have declared that your kingdom is among us. Open our eyes to see it, our ears to hear it, our hearts to hold it, our hands to serve it. Amen.   Scripture Lesson Excerpts of Genesis 43-45   **15-16**The men took the gifts, double the money, and Benjamin. They lost no time in getting to Egypt and meeting Joseph. When Joseph saw that they had Benjamin with them, he told his house steward, “Take these men into the house and make them at home. Butcher an animal and prepare a meal; these men are going to eat with me at noon.” **17-18**The steward did what Joseph had said and took them inside. But they became anxious when they were brought into Joseph’s home, thinking, “It’s the money; he thinks we ran off with the money on our first trip down here. And now he’s got us where he wants us—he’s going to turn us into slaves and confiscate our donkeys.” **19-22**So they went up to Joseph’s house steward and talked to him in the doorway. They said, “Listen, master. We came down here one other time to buy food. On our way home, the first night out we opened our bags and found our money at the mouth of the bag—the exact amount we’d paid. We’ve brought it all back and have plenty more to buy more food with. We have no idea who put the money in our bags.” **23**The steward said, “Everything’s in order. Don’t worry. Your God and the God of your father must have given you a bonus. I was paid in full.” And with that, he presented Simeon to them. **24-25**He then took them inside Joseph’s house and made them comfortable—gave them water to wash their feet and saw to the feeding of their donkeys. The brothers spread out their gifts as they waited for Joseph to show up at noon—they had been told that they were to have dinner with him. **26**When Joseph got home, they presented him with the gifts they had brought and bowed respectfully before him. **27**Joseph welcomed them and said, “And your old father whom you mentioned to me, how is he? Is he still alive?” **28**They said, “Yes—your servant our father is quite well, very much alive.” And they again bowed respectfully before him. **29**Then Joseph picked out his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son. He asked, “And is this your youngest brother that you told me about?” Then he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” **30-31**Deeply moved on seeing his brother and about to burst into tears, Joseph hurried out into another room and had a good cry. Then he washed his face, got a grip on himself, and said, “Let’s eat.” **32-34**Joseph was served at his private table, the brothers off by themselves and the Egyptians off by themselves (Egyptians won’t eat at the same table with Hebrews; it’s repulsive to them). The brothers were seated facing Joseph, arranged in order of their age, from the oldest to the youngest. They looked at one another wide-eyed, wondering what would happen next. When the brothers’ plates were served from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s plate came piled high, far more so than his brothers. And so the brothers feasted with Joseph, drinking freely. **45 1-2**Joseph couldn’t hold himself in any longer, keeping up a front before all his attendants. He cried out, “Leave! Clear out—everyone leave!” So there was no one with Joseph when he identified himself to his brothers. But his sobbing was so violent that the Egyptians couldn’t help but hear him. The news was soon reported to Pharaoh’s palace. **3**Joseph spoke to his brothers: “I am Joseph. Is my father really still alive?” But his brothers couldn’t say a word. They were speechless—they couldn’t believe what they were hearing and seeing. **4-8**“Come closer to me,” Joseph said to his brothers. They came closer. “I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. But don’t feel badly, don’t blame yourselves for selling me. God was behind it. God sent me here ahead of you to save lives. There has been a famine in the land now for two years; the famine will continue for five more years—neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me on ahead to pave the way and make sure there was a remnant in the land, to save your lives in an amazing act of deliverance. So you see, it wasn’t you who sent me here but God. He set me in place as a father to Pharaoh, put me in charge of his personal affairs, and made me ruler of all Egypt. **9-11**“Hurry back to my father. Tell him, ‘Your son Joseph says: I’m master of all of Egypt. Come as fast as you can and join me here. I’ll give you a place to live in Goshen where you’ll be close to me—you, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and anything else you can think of. I’ll take care of you there completely. There are still five more years of famine ahead; I’ll make sure all your needs are taken care of, you and everyone connected with you—you won’t want for a thing.’ **12-13**“Look at me. You can see for yourselves, and my brother Benjamin can see for himself, that it’s me, my own mouth, telling you all this. Tell my father all about the high position I hold in Egypt, tell him everything you’ve seen here, but don’t take all day—hurry up and get my father down here.” **14-15**Then Joseph threw himself on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. He then kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Only then were his brothers able to talk with him.   Sermon Reunification   The Response to the Word \* Hymn Called as Partner’s in Christ’s Sacrifice – GtG761  Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer  “For this I pray to God” / “For this I give thanks to God.” Congregational Response: “**Hear our prayer, O God.”**  And now, in confidence and in gratitude, we say the prayer together that Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, taught 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 and give us this day our daily bread** **and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** **For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**  Offertory Prayer Hymn In Christ There is No East and West – GtG318   Charge & Benediction  Leader: Lead us from this place, **People: Using the gift of imagination and creativity,** Leader: To find new ways to meet at the table, **People: With those known and unknown to us,** Leader: And even in this difficult season, **People: Teach us how to act in love and seek unity for your Kingdom. Amen.** | | |