



Service for the 10th Sunday after Trinity, 16th August 2020

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come with purpose, into the presence of the living God.
Come to worship, and to be amazed,
to discover and learn new things.
Come, knowing that God welcomes us
to live in and to share with your people.

HYMN: In Christ there is no east or west

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 In Christ there is no east or west,
In him no south or north,
But one great fam'ly bound by love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

3 Join hands, then, all the human race,
Whate'er your nation be;
All who my Father's image bear
Are surely kin to me.

2 In him shall true hearts ev'rywhere
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord
Close binding humankind.

4 In Christ now meet both east and west,
In him meet south and north,
All Christly souls are one in him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

John Oxenham (*altd*)

PRAYERS OF PRAISE & CONFESSION

Let us pray.

Living Lord, we praise you that you are a God who loves. You have given us a marvellous world to live in and to share with all your people. You, O God, love everyone equally, and we thank you that we are each unique. We thank you that each one of us has so much to give, and to receive, from each other. Thank you for each new experience that you give us.

Amen.

Lord, sometimes we only look as though we are listening to others.

We may even make all the right noises, but we confess that our attention is often anywhere rather than where it is supposed to be.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Sometimes we are too distracted by our own concerns.

We care only for ourselves and listen only to those who say what we want to hear.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Sometimes we don't listen to people because we don't like them, or because they are different from us. Sometimes we have bad or unhelpful thoughts.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Sometimes we don't listen to you, Lord, because we are too busy or a bit frightened about what you might say to us.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Amen.

THE 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, for ever and ever.

Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: St Matthew 15: 21-28

The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

²¹ Jesus left that place and went off to the territory near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman who lived in that region came to him. "Son of David!" she cried out. "Have mercy on me, sir! My daughter has a demon and is in a terrible condition."

²³ But Jesus did not say a word to her. His disciples came to him and begged him, "Send her away! She is following us and making all this noise!"

²⁴ Then Jesus replied, "I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the people of Israel."

²⁵ At this the woman came and fell at his feet. "Help me, sir!" she said.

²⁶ Jesus answered, "It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

²⁷ "That's true, sir," she answered, "but even the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from their masters' table."

²⁸ So Jesus answered her, "You are a woman of great faith! What you want will be done for you." And at that very moment her daughter was healed.

REFLECTION

This passage makes very uncomfortable reading. As we listen to the conversation that Jesus has with a Canaanite woman, a woman who is full of anguish, we may be shocked that in the first instance Jesus chooses to ignore her; then, when he does speak, it is in derogatory terms. Gosh, where is the Jesus who is full of compassion? As I said, not easy reading.

We learn in verse 21 that Jesus went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. This was a non-Jewish area: it was Gentile territory. This may have led the disciples to feel anxious. They were amongst Gentiles with whom they had little in common. They were outside their 'comfort zone'. Perhaps this is why, when approached by the woman who was shouting, they urged Jesus to send her away. They didn't want to invite this woman, who was not of

their religion, to speak to Jesus. She was an outsider, not of their clique. This alone makes uncomfortable reading, because it can ring true in many situations today.

So the woman approaches Jesus. In verse 22 she calls out “Son of David! Have mercy on me, sir!” Let’s just recap: not a Jew, but a Gentile; not a man, but a woman. No self-respecting woman would talk to a man in the way she was talking to Jesus. Remember, this was a Gentile woman instigating a conversation with a Jewish man. In the culture of the day, all social rules were being broken.

What does Jesus do? In verse 23 it says, “But Jesus did not say a word to her.” This is hard isn’t it? How can Jesus appear so indifferent to this woman’s anguish? It doesn’t sit well with us, does it? We just don’t know what is going on in Jesus’ mind at this moment.

But he doesn’t do what the disciples ask of him. He does not allow their anxieties or fears to influence him. He bypasses all their concerns about her being an outsider. He does not send her away. He wants to engage with the woman and – although not immediately – he does enter into a conversation with her. The woman now falls at Jesus’s feet: “Help me, sir!” She is in agony. You may, like me, be expecting Jesus to be compassionate, to pick her up, reassure her and give her what she needs.

But in this instance he works so differently from what we expect. Instead, in verse 26, he answered, “It’s not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs”.

That seems like a cruel response. Is Jesus suggesting that she is no better than a dog searching for scraps from the table? But wait for the woman’s response. She is not prepared to give up and she responds quickly with the words. “Yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” She is saying, surely there is enough to go round?

Jesus responds in verse 28, “Woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish!”

Jesus grants this woman her wish. Her faith tells him that she knows there is enough of God’s love to go round. The abundance of God cannot be contained for the few: it is big enough and wide enough for everyone. It can cross all racial boundaries and gender issues. The woman is still culturally in the same place as before, but she had the faith to ask Jesus to meet her there. Isn’t this woman challenging Jesus when she asks, “Surely there is enough to go round?” So Jesus meets her challenge. He rewards her faith. He doesn’t set any conditions. He just accepts her as she is. He shows compassion and grace and allows her to continue in her own culture. Jesus reaches out across all divides. He reaches out to all outsiders.

That is why this passage gives us such a sense of challenge today. We often talk about how we would like to welcome more people to join us at Broadway. During lockdown, I have watched far too much TV and read many newsfeeds on my phone. I can’t remember all the thing I have read, but one article springs to mind. It stated that the British public were turning to prayer, with one in four tuning into religious services. The Church of England has said that unexpectedly high numbers of people were watching online or broadcast services, and 6000 people phoned a prayer hotline in its first 48 hours of operation. It went on to say that a survey commissioned by the Christian aid agency, *Tearfund*, found that a third of

young adults aged between 18 and 34 had watched or listened to an online religious service, compared with one in five adults over the age of 55. One in five of those who have tuned into services say they have never gone to church.

Here we can see that many people are reaching out. Like the woman in our bible reading, they have a need and are reaching out using the platforms with which they are familiar. Churches are responding by coming out of their comfort zones to meet these people. Many will be using virtual services for the first time. We at Broadway are getting more familiar with using such technology. Let us pray, as we go forward, that we shall soon be able to worship together at church, but also that we may reach out and meet with others in different situations, stretching our boundaries.

Amen.

HYMN: Just as I am

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

4 Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

2 Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

5 Just as I am, thy love unknown
has broken every barrier down;
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

3 Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

6 Just as I am, of that free love
the breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come

Charlotte Elliott

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray.

Lord, the Canaanite woman sought your help. She loved her daughter so much, she was so desperately in need that she wouldn't give up until she had her answer.

We pray in faith: hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

Lord, may we learn from this woman, to wait on you expectantly, patiently, persistently, doggedly. Grant us the courage of our convictions when we truly believe we are doing your will.

We pray in faith: hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

We pray today for those who feel excluded, whatever their situation, whatever the reason: for prisoners, refugees, the homeless; for the sick, the mentally unstable; for any who feel that they are outsiders.

We pray in faith: hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

We pray for ourselves when our faith is weak, or we feel we don't belong. We pray for all those who are feeling lonely, and those who are feeling anxious.

We pray in faith: hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

Amen.

HYMN: And can it be

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment*

1 And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

2 'Tis mystery all! Th'Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

3 He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

5 No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Charles Wesley

BLESSING

We go out today, renewed and strengthened in faith,
ready to serve you, Lord, and to find you in the people we meet.
We go out to follow you, and our hearts.
Lead us, good Lord. **Amen.**