



“Jesus, and the Canaanite Woman”

Sunday 16th August 2020 20th in Ordinary

Rev. Danny and Deacon Sally Wheadon.

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Welcome: The Lighting of a Candle & 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 all with open arms.
Amen.

We gather here, Lord, ready to focus totally on you. Help us to be brave enough to ask the questions that we would like to ask, and open enough to hear your answer. In our worship today, speak to us, Lord. We are listening.
Amen.



SOF (1) 307 Jesus the name

- 1 Jesus - the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky!
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.
- 3 Jesus - the name to sinners dear,
The name to sinners given!
It scatters all their guilty fear,
It turns their hell to heaven.
- 4 Jesus - the prisoner's fetters
breaks, And bruises Satan's head;
Power into strengthless souls it
speaks, - And life into the dead.
- 5 O that the world might taste and
see - The riches of his grace!
The arms of love that compass
me- Would all mankind embrace.
- 6 His only righteousness I show,
His saving grace proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below
To cry: 'Behold the Lamb!'
- 7 Happy if with my latest breath
I might but gasp his name;
Preach him to all,
and cry in death:
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'

Prayers:

Lord God, we come before you now, we open our hearts to you. Help us to see that we can learn so much from each other, even from those with whom we think we may not share much in common. Make us willing to stand out from the crowd, to hear your voice, and act upon it.
Amen.

Lord, sometimes we 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 but 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.**

Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Living Lord, we praise you that you are a God who loves.

You have given us a marvelous 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.

Today's Reading: Matt. 15:21-28 NiV
Jesus and the Canaanite Woman

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Time to Reflect:

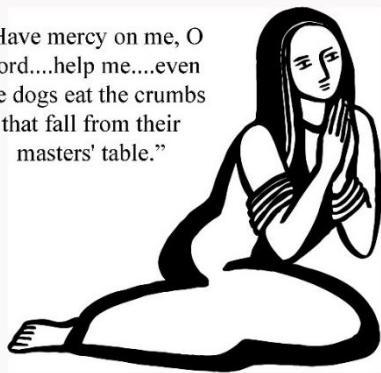
Over the years today's passage has provoked quite a lot of controversy and, indeed, you may be shocked by Jesus's words yourselves. There are some who say that Jesus was simply testing this woman's faith. There are others who say that it was this woman who more fully revealed Jesus' mission to him, and that it was at this point that it dawned on Jesus that his mission was wider than he had first realised. Some people say that the word for dogs in the Greek means 'little dogs,' 'puppies,' 'family pets,' really there was nothing too controversial or offensive in it. But today there are commentators who blatantly say that Jesus behaved badly towards this Canaanite woman and that he was being arrogant and racist and that we shouldn't attempt to excuse his behaviour. Some also suggest that Jesus had a smile on his face as he spoke and a twinkle in his eye. It was all meant to be tongue in cheek.

But the truth is, the gospel writer simply records Jesus' words. He tells us nothing of Jesus' tone of voice or facial expression and so each of us will hear and receive these words according to our own life experiences, according to things that have happened to us in our

past or perhaps things that are happening to us right now. We don't know what Jesus intended in speaking like he did but we do know that one of Jesus' ancestors was a Canaanite woman - Rahab, from Jericho. She appears in Jesus' family tree at the start of Matthew's Gospel. We do know that Jesus chose to enter a Gentile territory knowing that he would encounter people, not only of a different race, but people with whom the Jewish nation had had a long history of spiritual and military conflict? If Jesus felt these people were unclean and would affect the purity of Israel's religion and morality, why would he take his disciples there?

Holding God to His Word

"Have mercy on me, O Lord....help me....even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."



Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire."

Matthew 15

This was no random happening, Jesus chose to go to a Canaanite area to meet this Canaanite woman. And to understand why, rather than looking at these verses in isolation, we need to set them within the wider context, not only of the Gospel, but redemptive history itself.

Paul tells us in Romans 1:16 that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. It was through the Jewish people that God first demonstrated his love and holiness to the world. Paul tells us that the ancestry of Christ is traced from the Jews. The bottom line is that Jesus was Jewish and in John's gospel, Jesus himself makes clear that salvation is from the Jews. But we also sadly know from John's gospel that despite coming to that which was his own, his own did not receive him.

In fact, some of the Jewish religious leaders came to Jesus and demanded a miraculous sign from him to prove who he was, despite all the miracles and healings that Jesus had already performed. Jesus even began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because the people there did not turn from their evil ways. In fact, Jesus says,

“Woe to you Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon (where our passage is set today), they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgement than for you.” Hard words for the Jewish people to hear.

And immediately before today's passage, we find Jesus explaining to the Jewish people that the keeping of the law for its own sake, was not what God required of them. It was the spirit of the law that God was interested in, not the letter. The Jewish leaders were very particular about what people ate and about upholding the food laws. Jesus was trying to get across to them that it is not what goes into their mouths, but the things that come out of them, which make people unclean, because what comes out of a person's mouth comes from their heart. But sadly, the religious leaders were offended by this because they failed to recognise who Jesus really was.

So Jesus withdraws, with his disciples, to Gentile territory, this region of Tyre and Sidon which Jesus had previously held up as an example of people who

would have recognised his miracles and repented had they had the privilege of seeing them. There, this Canaanite woman who had not actually witnessed any of Jesus miracles, comes to him and calls out to him in the words of a Jewish prayer "Have mercy on me, Son of David." She got straight away what many of the Jewish religious elite could not. She would have been aware of the ancient rivalry between the Jewish people and her people and yet by calling him 'Son of David,' she readily acknowledged Jesus as a Jewish king and Messiah.

And I think Jesus took the disciples there precisely because he wanted them to witness this. The very disciples, who despite having Jesus in their boat, became terrified when a storm blew up causing Jesus to say 'You of little faith.' The disciples, who on another occasion when there was a storm and Jesus came to them walking on the water, failed to recognise him.

Here we see these same disciples who, in the story of the feeding of the five thousand, wanted to send the people away because they didn't believe there was enough for everyone, wanting to send this woman away too. But,

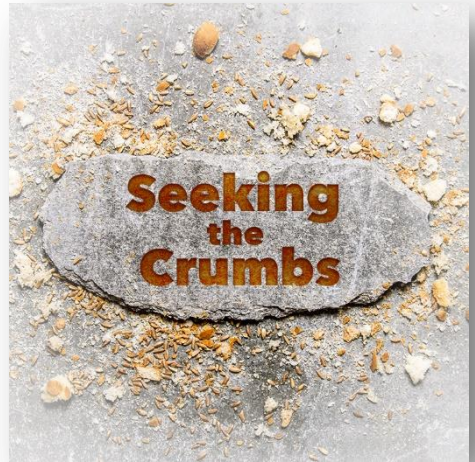
although Jesus didn't acknowledge the woman straight away, neither did he send her away as the disciples had asked. It might sound like I'm making excuses for Jesus now but I think his response "I was only sent for the lost sheep of Israel" was for the disciples' sake more than the woman's. I'm certain that Jesus knew right from the start of his ministry, that while he was Israel's Messiah, his mission was ultimately to the whole world. If it were not the case, why would he have healed the Gentile servant of a centurion early on in his ministry? Why didn't he send him away? I wonder if, in Jesus' response to this woman, he was defining the disciples understanding of his mission in order to challenge it. Because rather than sending her away, we're told that he granted this woman's request and her daughter was healed.

When Jesus said "Woman you have great faith," did he simply mean that she had faith that he could heal her daughter or was it that she had faith in God's redemption plan for the whole of humanity? This woman recognised that the Messiah had come first to Israel but she also knew that God's heart is for all people. She recognised that even a crumb from Jesus is powerful

enough to defeat the demon that has possessed her daughter. She knew that Jesus, the Son of David, has so much power that there is more than enough for the house of Israel and enough left over for her too. Indeed, Jesus demonstrated in the feeding miracles, that he could feed 5000 people and more with just five loaves and two fish, and still there was plenty left over. She understood that Jesus is not just hope for Israel but the whole world.

So what does it mean for us today? Are there people that we would prefer Jesus to have nothing to do with, people we would like Jesus to send away? In many centuries, including our own, there has been a great deal of drawing of lines around who's acceptable among Christian communities and who is not. I wonder, might we see this Gospel story today as one that demonstrates that the Messiah has come not just for his own people - and certainly not just for 'people like us' - but for the whole of the world.

Israel may have been the first focus of Jesus' ministry but in his death and resurrection, he extends mercy and salvation to all who would believe in him.



The Christian Life Hymnal 273
Adapted from "Souls of men why will ye scatter?"
"There's a wideness, in God's mercy"
Sang by Nate Macy
www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5LN1ZvwWfs

There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice
which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner,
And more graces for the good;
There is mercy with the Saviour;

There is healing in God's blood.
For the love of God is broader
than the measures of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more simple
we would take Christ at his word;
and our lives would be illumined
by the presence of our Lord.

There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;

A time of prayer

The Canaanite woman sought your help. She loved her daughter so much, she was so desperately in need, that she wouldn't give up till 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 that we don't belong.

We pray in faith.

Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord. Amen.



The images that appeared in this Sundays worship booklet were intended to underline the inclusivity of the Gospel and to be taken in the context of a woman seen as an outsider seeking help from Jesus. However, it has been pointed out that these images have negative connotations and have been used to undermine the campaign which seeks justice and equality for people of colour and ethnic minorities. Please be assured that this was in no way the intention in this instance and as the current Superintendent of the Jersey Methodist Circuit I acknowledge and apologise sincerely and unreservedly for the hurt and offence which has been caused. Just to be clear the Methodist Church GB believes that "Racism is a sin and contrary to the imperatives of the Gospel. Biblically, it is against all that we perceive of the unmotivated, spontaneous and indiscriminating love of God who in Jesus Christ gave himself for all. As Christian people we believe that with the coming of Jesus Christ a new relationship was initiated between people of different origins."

StF 409 Let us build a house

1. Let us build a house
where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and
children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams
and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ
shall end divisions:
all are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.
2. Let us build a house
where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children
dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross
shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one
we claim the faith of Jesus:
all are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

3. Let us build a house
where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured,
taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and
cries and laughter,
prayers of faith
and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim
from floor to rafter:
all are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

*Marty Haugen (born 1952) © 1994 GIA
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A prayer of blessing

*We go out today, renewed and
strengthened in faith, ready to
serve you, Lord, and find you in the
people we meet.*

*We go out to follow you, and our
hearts. Lead us, good Lord.
Amen.*

*And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with
you and all whom you love and all
those you are called to love, this
day and for evermore. Amen.*

Join us for a post service Coffee & Chat,
on the phone by dialing
02203 481 5240

Meeting ID: **878 0011 0669 #**
Participants ID: #
Password: **336542**

