



The Methodist Church

Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit

Worship at Home

Week beginning Sunday 16th August 2020

'Lord, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.'
[Psalm 90:1-2]

Welcome to worship with the Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit.

Wherever you may be, may you know the love of God enfold you and the Spirit of God lead you in this time of Worship.

StF N°24

Come, now is the time to worship.

Come, now is the time to give your heart.

Come, just as you are to worship.

Come, just as you before your God, come.

On day every tongue

Will confess you are God,

One day every knee will bow.

Still, the greatest treasure remains

For those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship

Opening Prayers

Eternal God,
Whose goodness exceeds that of our human experience;
Whose qualities are greater than the limits of our imagination;
Whose grace is fathomless and whose love is unmeasurable;
We present ourselves humbly before you today, in deepest appreciation that you have opened a way for us to come into your presence.

We pray forgiveness for our failings, in spite of your grace;
and we ask for mercy for the times we have failed to live up to your call on our lives.

We thank you for sending your Son to be our Saviour, the full expression of your great love.
We thank you for your Spirit who lives in us, our strength, our guide and our wisdom.

And now, whether we are in company or by ourselves, we ask your blessing at this time of worship, for we know that we are ONE in you.

Amen

Reading from Matthew 15:21-28

 **Think about what stands out to you in the story.**

Perceptions can often be challenged when we engage beyond ourselves. When we allow others voices to be heard by silencing our own. But I wonder what stood out to you in the story of the Canaanite woman's faith.

Did you hear the voice of the Canaanite woman? Who shouted to Jesus to heal her daughter from being tormented by a demon?

Did you hear the voice of Jesus' disciples urging him to send her away?

Or Did you hear the voice of Jesus?

Perhaps you found the whole account of what took place shocking. That the woman's daughter would suffer the torment of a demon. That Jesus did not answer the woman at first.

That the disciples sought Jesus to get rid of her, treating her like a nuisance. That Jesus used the image of dogs. Or that the Canaanite woman never gave up.

Perhaps the instant healing of the daughter stands out most to you. The woman receives affirmation from Jesus when he says, 'great is your faith!' And with a further word, 'Let it be done for you as you wish,' her daughter was healed instantly.

This might raise questions about demons; about times when healing has not come instantly or has not come at all.

I do not claim to have the answers to these questions. All I have is my experience and the experiences of others which people have shared with me over the years.

I often try and distinguish between healing and cure. The healing comes in different forms, and when I think about healing, I do so through the lens of the good news that death is not the final word and eternal life is found through Jesus. Sometimes, I believe someone can be healed even when they are not cured of their illness. Although others have testimony to receiving a cure healing of illness.

I would suggest that the greatest healing is being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. I have heard people give testimony to being healed from the torment of a demon and we should give praise to God for how we see people's lives transformed through such healing. I would like to frame the subject of demons in a broader context. But before I continue, please note that it is never acceptable to wrongly name a mental illness or any other illness as being anything other than that, an illness.

Over the years I have spoken with some Christians who seem to obsess over things which they claim to be evil. This troubles me and I usually suggest they cease to look for evil and focus upon Christ.

In the baptism service, the questions asked of the baptism candidates sums this up. Do you turn away from evil and all that denies God? And. Do you turn to God, trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and in the Holy

Spirit as Helper and Guide? The suggested response to both those questions is 'By the grace of God, I do.'

It is not that we do not recognise the existence of evil, I think it is quite easy to see it in the world when we but glance back. But we are to turn away from it, we are to turn away from all that denies God. Earlier in the gospel according to Matthew, chapter six, Jesus talks about not having two masters. He references God and money, stating that you cannot serve both God and Money.

I believe this is true of other things in life and will be different for everyone. The question to ask is: is this master over me or am I Master of It? I.e., am I in control of it? Whatever, 'it' might be?

We can read of how Jesus dealt with Satan, when he was being tested in the wilderness. 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only." If we worship the Lord Our God and serve him only, we too are saying away from me Satan.

Jesus is Lord! We have an invitation is to share in being part of God's kingdom come, now, on earth as in heaven. And Jesus is Lord, not because you or I or anyone else accepts Jesus as Lord but because Jesus is Lord! So, who would you choose to follow? Who do you worship and who do you serve? I pray you choose life with God.

Let's look again at the story. We can find the account of this story also in the gospel according to Mark, in chapter seven. However, the exchange between Jesus and his disciples was not recorded there. Yet, the account in the gospel according to Matthew the disciples exchange is recorded and is worth noting.

Could it be that Jesus' response to the woman is done in such a manner as to teach the disciples and address their attitudes towards the Canaanite woman. I would like to suggest that what we find is Jesus engaging experiential learning in teaching the disciples to see something within themselves.

The disciples came to Jesus and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps

shouting after us.' And we can recall earlier before entering the district of Tyre and Sidon that Jesus had taught that what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. What was the attitude towards this Canaanite woman? Some Biblical scholars note how Gentiles might appeal to passing magicians for exorcisms, this would give some merit to the way Jesus responded.

But what then of the disciples treating the woman like a nuisance. Was this a point of teaching on how Jesus came for the Salvation of all people. That whilst Jesus used the imagery of dogs, it found agreement with the disciples to then be met with Jesus affirming the woman's faith. The woman who was persistent not to lose sight of Jesus, not to be put off by cultural norms or human precepts but recognised that even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. That she seeks Jesus as master and not a means to an end.

Do you ever think about what attitudes you carry, possibly unconsciously? I think that everyone possesses unconscious bias. That the cultural environments people grow up in can have a significant influence on how we view the world around us.

Think about what type of person you might be more inclined to share the good news about Jesus with? What influences that inclination? And the more challenging question to think about is who we might view as a nuisance? Are we crossing over the road from, or neglecting to see? Or are we even preventing others from coming to Jesus? We might think about ways in which this could happen.

Going forward, I would encourage being open to God shaping how we see and engage with others? I would encourage being open to God challenging our perceptions to reveal sight of his kingdom values. I would encourage being open to hearing and listening to those voices in society which have been silenced and asking God to speak into every heart and part of life today.

Amen.

(Reflection offered by Revd. Gareth Baron)

StF N°489

1. All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

2. Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

3. Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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Prayers of intercession

Loving heavenly Father.
We pray for this world.

For those affected by war and conflict we
pray for peace.

For those affected by homelessness we
pray for shelter.

For those affected by hunger we pray for
sustenance.

For those affected by natural and manmade
disaster we pray for relief.

For those who are imprisoned by illness, by
addiction or by slavery we pray for
freedom in the name of Christ.

Lord be with those working on the front line in
whatever field,
we pray that you will strengthen them, guide
them and protect them.

For those in this world with no hope we
pray that they might find hope in and through
the name of Jesus.

Help us to see the part that we might play in
bringing relief, either remotely or directly.
Open our eyes to the needs of others,
whether they are far away or on our
doorstep.

We lift these prayers to you, in the name of
Jesus our Saviour.
Amen

StF N°351

1. In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

2. In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied
for every sin on him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.

3. There in the ground his body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
then bursting forth in glorious Day
up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory,
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am his and he is mine –
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4. No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Keith Getty (*b.* 1974) and Stuart Townend (*b.* 1963)

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Blessing

*The love of the Father enfold us,
the wisdom of the Son enlighten us,
the fire of the Spirit enflame us;
and the blessing of God, the Three in One,
be upon us and abide with us now and for
ever. Amen.

*We go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory.
Amen.