

Worship for 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome to this service by the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit for the week beginning 16th August. My name is David Greenwood and it is my privilege to welcome you today.

*Whether you join us regularly or are just browsing,
whether you live locally or are joining us from afar,
whether you come with faith or come with doubt,
whether you watch it all or just a part,
all are welcome here.*

A number of people have contributed to our service this week:

*The hymns have been chosen by Barbara Greenwood,
Candy Evans leads our opening prayers,
Kat Pearson and I read the Bible passages,
The word is given by Malcolm Aldridge
Sam McBratney leads the Prayers of Intercession
and the closing prayers*

As ever, the written order of service is put together by Kate Tennyson and the sound and vision by Tim Pearson.

*We thank them all for their contribution.
If you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on swc.katetennyson@gmail.com*

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

I'm Candy Evans, a Worship Leader from Kenilworth Methodist Church

As we come together, worshipping at different times and in different places, we remember the words from the Psalm set for today, number 133:

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!*

It might be unity online but we are still called
We are called, and we have come
We have been summoned, and we are here
We have found the courage to join in worship in the middle of a time that's still pretty confusing
Lord, come among us

Hymn: StF 20 – Be still for the presence of the Lord

- 1. Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found –
we stand on holy ground.
Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.**
- 2. Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight –
our radiant King of light!
Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.**
- 3. Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him –
in faith receive from him.
Be still,**

**for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.**

Opening Prayers

Let's pray

Merciful Father,
Thank you for creating us and calling us to be
your children.

Thank you for the peace that comes when we
are able to live together in harmony.

Forgive us for the times when we've been
divided, when we've been quick to speak and
slow to listen.

Give us the courage to consider and confront our
differences, listening for your voice in the noise
of competing points of view.

Help us to be humble in heart and seekers of
reconciliation and peace, though not at the
expense of your challenge and choice.

We thank you that you hear our struggles and
forgive us when we don't match up.

Risen Lord,
Thank you for those moments when we allow
you to unite us in your Spirit.

Thank you for choosing us to be part of your
body in the world, proclaiming your good news
and acting with love.

May you be glorified through us and be made
known to the ends of the earth.

Compassionate Jesus,
Thank you for showing us your heart for all, for
giving us the perfect example of how to see
everyone, knowing us all by name.

We thank and praise you for the concern you
have shown each of us.

You truly are our Good Shepherd, the giver of
abundant life.

Amen

Hymn: StF 416 – There's a wideness in God's
mercy

- 1. 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.**
- 2. There is plentiful redemption
in the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the Head.**
- 3. There is grace enough for thousands
of new worlds as great as this;
there is room for fresh creations
in that upper home of bliss**
- 4. For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.**
- 5. But we make his love too narrow
by false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness
with a zeal he will not own.**
- 6. If you love were but more simple
we should take him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined
by the presence of our Lord.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Psalm *Psalm 67*

*God, be gracious to us and bless us
and show us the light of your countenance,
and be merciful to us,
that your way may be known on earth,
your saving health among all nations.
Let the people praise you, O God;
let all the people praise you.*

*Let the nations rejoice and be glad,
for you judge the people with wisdom,
and you guide the nations upon earth.*

*Let the people praise you, O God;
let all the people praise you.*

*Then shall the earth bring forth the harvest,
and God, even our own God, shall give us great
blessing.*

*Dear God you will bless us indeed,
and all the ends of the earth shall praise your
holy name.*

*Jim Cotter, "By Stony Paths", Cairns Publications,
1991*

Gospel Matthew 15:21-28

(New International Version)

The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² 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."

²³ 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."

²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁷ "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Sermon

I recently picked up my regular Monthly Christianity magazine. This is fairly modern in style with quite a lot of comment on current affairs and news in the wider world of

Christianity. It was a few weeks ago when there was much consternation and public comment about persecution and abuse of minority sections of society in particular homing in on the name of the organisation 'Black lives matter'. Plastered all over the front cover of the magazine were the words 'Black Lives matter to Jesus'.

This was very attention catching and certainly provoked a lot of comment. I naturally thought to myself 'well surely all lives matter to Jesus'; I would take it for granted myself that this would include all creeds and colours. But then I began to wonder, as a would be disciple of Jesus, if this was equally true for me and for Jesus followers in general.

I put the matter on one side intending to search my soul in due course thinking in the back of mind that I might not come out of this quite as well as I would have liked. After a lot of thought I concluded that the main reason why skin colour is significant is because it makes it all too easy to attach an offensive or prejudicial label to a particular group of people without too much serious consideration. Naturally of course we would say that this is surely contrary to our faith.

But the more I thought about it the problem was not so much about colour differences but more about the prejudices that we grow to hold against other people for a whole variety of reasons. For instance we may hold a lower opinion of others because they are not of good old British heritage; or maybe they don't speak our language properly; maybe they have different customs to us; maybe a different religion to ours; may be there is something bad in the historic relationship between our nation and theirs. It might be something which is much more personal than this too; sometimes affluent people are unconsciously prejudiced against those living in poverty especially if they are

unfortunate enough to live on a troublesome council house estate; vice versa applies too.

But then in all innocence I began to read today's verses from Matthew's Gospel and I had a bit of a shock for there was my teacher, my Lord and saviour turning to a woman in need and declining to help her apparently because she was a Canaanite and not one of the children of Israel, in other words she was not one of the favoured Jewish nation.

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" said Jesus seemingly in response to her pleas for help.

What was going on I asked myself? When I read it all again in fact it was his disciples who had initially asked him to send her away because she had been pestering them. She had kept going on at them and they obviously got rather tired of it - you can imagine what might have been going through their minds 'we've told you that our master has nothing to do with Canaanites or any other non-Jewish tribe for that matter! It's us that Jesus has come to lead and to save! You're becoming quite an irritation so please go away!!

Oh dear I thought to myself this is almost worse than the ill-treatment of black people and certainly betrays a serious form of prejudice. This passage must be a mistake. Then I read the next bit where it seemed that Jesus likened her and her race to dogs belonging to the Israelites. Even worse the poor woman accepted her lowly status and that at best she could only expect to share the scraps and crumbs that fell to the floor under the masters table.

This was not my Jesus! There was no way that he could be part of this. Was it some awful charade to test this woman's faith and to make her bend to his will? Was he teaching her a lesson that she could take back to her Canaanite family? But then I noticed that Jesus disciples were now

silent and there were no more protests from them.

No wonder that they had become subdued! The lesson on this day was for them and in her own way the woman was the teacher's assistant. Jesus had picked up on the disciples initial irritation and desire to be rid of her. They probably did consider her not much better than a dog. But yes of course they were the victims of the charade and the lesson was all for them!

Of course Jesus would help the woman not just because of her apparent faith in him but also because of her humility and perseverance in her pleadings which were entirely unselfish. His gracious intervention on behalf of this outsider in the eyes of the Jews and his instant healing of her daughter was a clear rejection of the views expressed by his disciples.

The nice comfy assurance that his disciples and the lost sheep of Israel were indeed so highly favoured by God and that no other race counted for much at all, was metaphorically thrown out of the window. Jesus already knew what was going through the minds of his disciples and threw their thoughts back at them.

'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel' sounds terrible when taken literally and upon hearing this his followers must have felt ashamed if not embarrassed to have thought that about their master. Maybe they picked up a hint of well meant sarcasm in Jesus voice. It was true of course that according to the ancient scriptures the Messiah would come to save the Jewish nation but not to the exclusion of all others and indeed Jesus had a much broader agenda that was being progressively revealed.

So lets look at some similar thoughts that might be going on in the back of our minds today. For instance as long as we can walk safely along the streets of our towns and cities does it matter if there is a little injustice somewhere to make that

possible? If illegal immigrants arrive on our shores maybe we should help and encourage them to go to another country or back home because if they are seen to be welcoming them then we might get a whole lot more turn up!

It's ok though isn't it that other lowly paid immigrants pick those lovely berries that we enjoy - as long as they don't earn too much and they go back home afterwards!

I find that the question for me is whether I sometimes think like those disciples too. Maybe it is a question that many of us should ask ourselves. I also wonder if my faith and my humility could get anywhere near matching that of the Canaanite woman.

One of the well-known prayers in our Communion service is the prayer said before we approach the Lords table. It says 'we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table but your are the same lord whose property is always to have mercy'. In other words we are trying to put ourselves in the same position and capacity as the Canaanite woman. I wonder though if we have managed to shake off all of the prejudices hidden away in our minds and adopted instead that woman's state of humility when we come to share in The Lord's communion.

AMEN

Affirmation of Faith

I would like to lead our affirmation of faith today as a short series of questions and answers bearing in mind the subject of my talk.

Lets try it shall we:-

Do we believe in God The Father who made the world? Before we answer let us remember that 'the world' includes all of its people and peoples as being equal to us personally and equal to our nation. Our faith doesn't say some are born

better or worse; more favoured or less favoured in our Lord's eyes!

The answer is - We believe in God the Father who made the world. Let's think about the implications!

Do we believe in Jesus Christ , his Son, who redeemed humankind? There are no exclusions in the term humankind.

The answer is - We believe in Jesus Christ , his Son, who redeemed humankind. Can we say that hand on heart?

Do- we believe in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God. Yes again all lives are born equally of The Holy Spirit.

The answer is - we believe in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God.

I now invite you to join me in affirming the faith of the Church:

**We believe in God the Father,
who made the world.
We believe in Jesus Christ, his Son,
who redeemed humankind.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God.**

What we have affirmed is the faith of the Methodist Church - that's us; you and me!

AMEN

Hymn: StF 685 – In Christ there is no east or west

- 1. In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.**
- 2. In him shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close-binding humankind.**

3. Join hands then all the human race,
whate'er your nation be;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me.
4. In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christlike souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Let us pray.

Holy are you, Lord God, Sovereign of the
Universe,
the source of all holiness.

From the beginning you have been gracious and
bestowed on us every good gift:

you have given us breath;
you have provided a world where all can find a
home
and material sustenance;

you have entrusted us with minds and memories
that we may learn and grow and prosper.

You have given us the stuff of life, and named it
good:

for this, we give you thanks.

Amen

Hymn: StF 522 – I should like to speak to you

1. **I should like to speak to you,
for I know you're there!
Every time I try, I find
it's hard to make a prayer.**

*Could you see what I'm thinking
and know that it's a prayer?
Could you look into my heart
and find you're welcome there?
Could I bring you all my hopes and dreams,
my moments of despair?*

*Could you take what I'm thinking
and find that it's a prayer? A prayer!*

2. Lots of things I'd like to say,
seem to disappear,
and I don't feel sure that they're
the things you'd want to hear!

*Could you see what I'm thinking
and know that it's a prayer?
Could you look into my heart
and find you're welcome there?
Could I bring you all my hopes and dreams,
my moments of despair?
Could you take what I'm thinking
and find that it's a prayer? A prayer!*

3. If I get it wrong sometimes,
help me know you're there,
listening to me patiently,
and you want my prayer!

*Could you see what I'm thinking
and know that it's a prayer?
Could you look into my heart
and find you're welcome there?
Could I bring you all my hopes and dreams,
my moments of despair?
Could you take what I'm thinking
and find that it's a prayer? A prayer!*

Prayers of intercession

Yet our world remains broken, life is stifled and
snuffed out,
too many remain homeless.

We have abused our intellectual gifts, we have
refused to share;
we have chosen not to remember
and thus repeated the mistakes of the past.

Forgive us, and heal our world which, though we
claim it as our own, remains your precious gift..

Give us peace, O Lord:
a peace that liberates, and does not placate;
a peace which rejoices in diversity, and does not

crush it;
a peace based on justice, mercy, decency, and
even love.

We remember again, with compassion fatigue,
those areas in our world where peace is absent.

Give the leaders of the world
new resolve to pray, to think, to act for peace,
that all may once again share your good gifts.

Renew our commitment also to remember that
the past may be resigned to history.

Give us hope, O Lord;
a hope which is grounded in reality, but not
bound by it;
a hope that sees the difficulties, but holds its
own;
a hope that envisions, excites, and empowers..

And once again
we pray for ourselves,
that we may live in hope, and work for the
changes that will overcome despair.

Hold our dreams ever before us, that we may be
sustained,
and teach us to tread carefully upon the dreams
of others,
that this community may support and encourage
all of us.

The Lord's Prayer

And now we join our prayers with those of the
whole church, as we say together:

**Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever
Amen**

The Offering & prayer

We offer to God all that we have and are:
let us pray:

Loving God,
you have offered us everything
in your Son, Jesus Christ.
Help us to give and receive
that we may learn, and inspire others,
to become generous;
in the name of Christ.

Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 319 – Christ triumphant ever reigning

**1. Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:**

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

**2. Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
Power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:**

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

**3. Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,
victim crucified!
Death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:**

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

**4. Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!**

**Sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:**

***Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!***

- 5. So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:**

***Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!***

Prayer & blessing

Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid;
for it is the Lord who goes with you.
Your God will not fail you or forsake you.

May you know the blessing of God upon your
life,
who is the Source, Word and Power of Love,
this and every day.

Amen.