

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 5th September

Trinity 14

*At the beginning of our services in church today we will light a candle,
you may wish to light a candle at home too.*

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long." Psalm 146 v 1 and 2

First hymn: O for a thousand tongues to sing

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my dear Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace.

2 Jesus - the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.

3 He speaks; and, listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
the humble poor believe.

4 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim
and spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of thy name.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) CCLI Licence 2370586

Kyrie Confession:

We confess to you our lack of care for the world you have given us.
Lord have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you our selfishness in not sharing the earth's bounty fairly.
Christ have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

We confess to you our failure to protect resources for others.
Lord have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution: May almighty God, who sent his Son into the world to save sinners, bring you his pardon and peace, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Collect: Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth: through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

New Testament Reading: James 2:1-17

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Gradual Hymn: 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.
Amen.

David J Evans (born 1957) © 1986 Thankyou Music adm. by kingswaysongs.com. Used by permission. CCLI Licence 2370586

Gospel Reading: Mark 7 verses 24 – 37

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

Reflection

Scripture nearly always works on at least three levels. Scripture teaches us, challenges us, encourages us in our relationship with God, with our neighbour, and with ourselves. When have our ideas and experiences of God been opened up and we have found God more inclusive and responsive to us than we could have imagined? Maybe times when we have felt that we are unacceptable only to find God welcoming?

This insistent woman finds Jesus because of her desperate concern for her child. And when Jesus says "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" she comes back with "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Now maybe she was just being sassy, had a smart mouth, but given that her child is at home desperately ill I think that like the parable of the widow knocking on the judge's door demanding justice she is driven by her need to convince Jesus to heal her daughter even if she is from the wrong side of town, or the wrong side of the Sea of Galilee.

And Jesus is convinced by her argument. In allowing himself to be persuaded by the woman's argument Jesus opens himself up to a ministry with the Gentiles. And makes himself even more vulnerable to criticism by the religiously righteous of Israel. How many times have you helped someone only to be criticised and asked "What are you doing that for? Why are you helping him/her, with the inference being that they don't deserve help."

Scripture also teaches and challenges us about our relationship with others. I wonder what are the encounters we have had that have opened us up to people and issues that were not our natural inclination?

In the second healing story we hear this morning Jesus heals the deaf and dumb man with the words "Be Opened". Despite his instructions the man and the witnesses to this healing will not keep it a secret and so now the Gentiles are acknowledging Jesus in the language of the Messianic prophecies from Isaiah. Jesus then seems to give up all resistance and throws a miraculous banquet for those on the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee and in doing this effectively declares his ministry to the Gentiles as well as the house of Israel.

Who has opened us up? And what have we had to confront in our own assumptions before we could see the humanity of another? As we watch the evening news it is as desperately urgent today as it was in Jesus day. And it is no easier. Being opened up by the spirit invariably leads us into a bigger world than the one we bargained for and we need to move beyond the family or group we were born into.

This is a challenging story this week and if it shocked Jesus and those who knew him personally then it will certainly challenge us. But it is a story ultimately about inclusion, of just how inclusive and all embracing the kingdom of God is. And that is good news for us and for our world. Nothing is outside the circle of God's love. Even so, come Lord Jesus Christ, come and open us to the fullness of God.

Prayers of Intercession

God feeds all who come to him hungry and we as the Church are expected to share in that work. Lord, awaken in us our need of you and make us hungry and thirsty for you, both as individuals and as the Church of God. Let no other issues side-track us from seeking you, and increase our love and compassion so that we long to serve you in the world around us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, allow our world to see the true value of things, so that worthless and dangerous is unmasked and real needs acknowledged.

Guide our leaders in wisdom and integrity and enable us all to co-operate in proper care and stewardship of the world's resources.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, as we eat our food this week, remind us of your spiritual feeding. May the meals we prepare and eat together be opportunities for drawing closer to one another and to you.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for all who need medical treatment or are waiting in pain for surgery. We pray for those who have become addicted and long to be set free. We pray for all whose wrong choices have ended in heartache, disillusionment and despair.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones. Have mercy on those approaching death who have no knowledge of you. May they respond to the true and living God and know your love forever.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we thank you for nourishing us with spiritual food that speaks to our hearts.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Let us now pray the Lord's Prayer together

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.

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Final Hymn: I heard the voice of Jesus say

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Come unto me and rest;
lay down, thou weary one, lay down
thy head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'I am this dark world's Light;
look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk,
till travelling days are done.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) CCLI Licence 2370586

Final Prayer

The Lord God Almighty is our Father: **he loves and tenderly cares for us.**

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour: **he has redeemed us and will defend us to the end.**

The Lord, the Holy Spirit is among us: **He will lead us in God's way.**

To God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory today and forever. Amen.

Sources: Common Worship, New Patterns for Worship, material from which is included here, are copyright© The Archbishops' Council 2000, 2002 and 2006 and published by Church House Publishing. Prayers of Intercession are adapted from prayers by Susan Sayers. Hymn words are printed under CCLI License Number: 2370586