

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Psalm 67, Matthew 15. (10-20),21-28

**Call to worship.**

May your way be known everywhere, God; in the hidden places of our hearts; in the comfort of our homes; in every corner of our world; in the farthest reaches of creation. You transform us; you heal our lives; you renew the earth and every creature. Let our praise for you shake the rafters with songs of joy! Amen

MP 228

Here from the world we turn, Jesus to seek; here may his loving voice tenderly speak!  
Jesus, our dearest friend, while at thy feet we bend, O let Thy smile descend! 'tis thee we seek.

Come, Holy Comforter, Presence Divine, now in our longing hearts graciously shine!  
O for thy mighty power! O for a blessed shower, filling this hallowed hour with joy divine.

Saviour, thy work revive! Here may we see those who are dead in sin quickened by thee!  
Come to our hearts' delight, make every burden light, cheer thou our waiting sight; we long for thee.

**Prayer & Lord's Prayer**

Lord God, as we come before you now, we open our hearts to you. Help us to see that we can learn so much from others, 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 Father for not listening out for your word.

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. Lord's Prayer. Amen.

MP 411

Let there be love shared among us, let there be love in our eyes,  
may now Your love sweep this nation, cause us O Lord to arise:  
give us a fresh understanding of brotherly love that is real;  
let there be love shared among us, let there be love. *Sing twice*

**All Age talk.** Object: a newspaper

**Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly. (v. 28)**

Good morning, boys and girls! How are you this morning? Today we are going to talk about persistence. Have any of you heard that word before? Can anyone tell me what it means? "Persistence" means "never give up." When you are persistent, you keep trying until you succeed. The newspaper reporters have to call people and interview them. Some people are hard to find! So the newspaper reporters keep 'phoning maybe for days or weeks. If the person won't answer the telephone at home, the reporter might have to try to call them at work. The reporter might have to

drive to the person's house and knock on the front door. That can be very hard work and time consuming.

Our gospel lesson today tells the story of a woman who was very persistent. In Jesus' time, people were divided by different cultures. They tended not to mix with each other. They just did not want to have any contact at all. In our New Testament reading this morning Jesus meets a woman from a different culture. His disciples tell him: "Get rid of this woman! She's different from us, we shouldn't talk to her!" But Jesus does not do what they the disciples say he should. The woman wants to talk to Jesus because her daughter is sick. She wants Jesus to make her daughter well. She asks Jesus several times, "Help my daughter!" But Jesus is careful. He knows that different cultures don't get along. If word gets out that he helped someone who wasn't one of "his" people, it could cause a big backlash against him. So Jesus puts her off. He tells her that he is the Messiah, and he has only come to save his people. But the woman doesn't give up. She keeps talking to Jesus, trying to persuade him to help her daughter. Finally, Jesus gives in. He says, "Great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Jesus was impressed by the woman's persistence. She knew that she was from a different culture, and she knew that she should not talk to Jesus. But she *believed* in Jesus. Her faith was so great in him -- and her wish for her daughter to be well was so strong -- that she was willing to do whatever it took to talk to Jesus and to beg him for her daughter's health. Ask and it shall be given to you" (Luke 11:9). But, as we can see in the story of this woman, sometimes it takes more than just asking once. When we ask for something, we have to mean it. We have to be persistent. We have to seek the things that we want and work hard to make them, through God's grace, our own. Amen.

#### CH4 225

Summer suns are glowing over land and sea, happy light is flowing, bountiful and free.  
Everything rejoices in the mellow rays, all earth's thousand voices swell the psalm of praise.

God's free mercy streameth over all the world, and his banner gleameth, everywhere unfurled.  
Broad and deep and glorious as the heaven above, shines in might victorious his eternal love.

Lord, upon our blindness thy pure radiance pour; for thy loving-kindness make us love thee more.  
And when clouds are drifting dark across our sky, then, the veil uplifting, Father, be thou nigh.

We will never doubt thee, though thou veil thy light: life is dark without thee; death with thee is bright.  
Light of Light! shine o'er us on our pilgrim way, go thou still before us to the endless day.

#### Psalm 67

<sup>1</sup>May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us

<sup>2</sup>so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

<sup>3</sup>May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

<sup>4</sup>May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth.

<sup>5</sup>May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

<sup>6</sup>The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us.

<sup>7</sup>May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

#### **Intercession prayers.**

Sisters and brothers in Christ, God invites us to hold the needs of friends and loved ones before Him. And so, loving our neighbours as ourselves, we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions on behalf of the church and the world.

Faithful God, we pray today for your blessing to be upon this congregation, and all the other congregations in our towns and villages, and for your presence to be seen clearly in what we do and say every day. We pray that your joy and your love will flow freely in and through us and that we might

encourage others to learn of your joy and love for us. Creator God, we pray for all in authority that they may never be tempted to misuse their power. We continue to pray for persecuted Christian believers and for minority Christian communities where they are under pressure and for all who suffer for their faith. Father God, we pray for the times when our blinkered vision prevents us from taking care of our immediate family and household or when through our busyness, we take no part in the life of our neighbourhood or the wider community. We pray for the children going back to school. Keep them safe Lord and encourage them to listen to their teachers and learn as much as they can whilst in school.

Loving God, friend of those in need, your Son Jesus can free us from our burdens and heal our bodies and spirits. We pray for those still burdened, those seeking healing, those in need within the church and the world. We pray too for those suffering from addiction of any kind and ask that you help them to put the temptation of Satan and the world behind them. And we continue to pray for those affected by the pandemic in any way.

Merciful God, we commend into your hands those who have died. We especially think of the victims of the train derailment. Be with the survivors and enfold them in your care as they recover. Help the families of the three who lost their lives. Enfold them in your loving arms as they come to terms with their loss. You gave them breath and loved them through their journey of life. Receive them now at the end of that journey into your eternal presence and may they rest in everlasting peace. Merciful Father, Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

#### MP 419

Like a mighty river flowing, like a flower in beauty growing,  
far beyond all human knowing is the perfect peace of God.

Like the hills serene and even, like the coursing clouds of heaven,  
like the heart that's been forgiven, is the perfect peace of God.

Like the summer breezes playing, like the tall trees softly swaying,  
like the lips of silent praying is the perfect peace of God.

Like the morning sun ascended, like the scents of evening blended,  
like a friendship never ended is the perfect peace of God.

Like the azure ocean swelling, like the jewel all-excelling,  
far beyond our human telling is the perfect peace of God.

Mathew 15: 10-28 <sup>10</sup> Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. <sup>11</sup> What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them." <sup>12</sup> Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this? <sup>13</sup> He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. <sup>14</sup> Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." <sup>15</sup> Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." <sup>16</sup> "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. <sup>17</sup> "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? <sup>18</sup> But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. <sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. <sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them."

**The Faith of a Canaanite Woman** <sup>21</sup> Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> 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." <sup>23</sup> 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." <sup>24</sup> He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." <sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. <sup>26</sup> He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to

the dogs.”<sup>27</sup> “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

### **Sermon** Matthew 15:10 - 28

One day, Jesus and the Devil were having a discussion about who was best, so God suggested a typing competition. So God sat them down at two computers, one each, and told them to type up an article written on a piece of paper. The first to complete the typing would win. Anyway, both Jesus and the Devil were typing away frantically, when there was a power cut and both computers switched off. Their typing work had disappeared from the two screens.

When the power was restored, and the computers re-booted, Jesus's work re-appeared on his screen, but the Devil could get nothing back and had lost all his work. So Jesus was declared the winner. The Devil complained bitterly to God saying that it wasn't fair at all and demanded a rematch, but God said, "Stop whinging Satan, you know why Jesus got his work back - everyone knows "JESUS SAVES!"

The first part of the passage was for the Jewish listeners, especially the Pharisees, who followed very strict dietary laws. Most of those laws are laid down in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and they are matters of deep concern, since breaking them was seen as separating oneself from the community of faith. There was a fairly long list of things that would separate them from their faith if they broke the rules. Jesus wasn't just taking on the Pharisees; he was also going against the teachings of the Torah. Certainly not the thing to do but it was deliberate to bring the attention on what they were probably doing without even thinking about the consequences. “Nothing you eat can defile you. But what comes out of your mouth absolutely will defile you.” Dirty words. Vile name-calling. Demeaning others by word or deed. These are the things that defile us. How little attention is paid to this rule laid down by Jesus! We finger-point, calling out those who don't live as we do. If we remember that this statement by Jesus comes immediately before the Gospel words, we are invited to concentrate on the story of the Canaanite woman which takes on some importance we may have missed -- that we were allowed to miss in most of the teaching we have ever received on this woman's encounter with Jesus.

She approaches Jesus first from some short distance away. She is shouting “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!” Jesus ignores her and keeps on walking. She shouts again: “Have mercy, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” Jesus doesn't answer her. He keeps on walking, ignoring her pleas. His disciples come to him and beg him to do *something*. Even to send her away would be more merciful than ignoring her like this. What is Jesus thinking? Well, apparently, he says what he's thinking. “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” She is not easily dismissed, and she is not going to stop until she gets what she wants. She catches up to Jesus and throws herself on the ground in front of him. “Lord, help me!” She's begging him to help her at this point he says to her: “It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.” The woman, undaunted, replies: “Yes, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” Dogs are not beloved pets in the Middle East. They are working dogs and hang around the table, hoping that scraps will come their way. I remember my Great uncle Peter boiling the potato peelings up in a big pot and anything that was left would be added to the pot for his collie. He was a faithful sheepdog my uncle valued the dog but he was another worker helping my uncle to the work on the farm and guarding the hen house. That pot used to smell to high heaven but the dog and the hens loved the mash that he made for them.

It was normal among the Jews that the Canaanites were unclean, *ritually* unclean. They were unfit for the Kingdom of God, outcasts literally, since it was their land before the Israelites came and drove out the people who had been living in Canaan. The woman was not shocked at Jesus ignoring her. She was used to being shunted to one side, pushed out of the path of any men she passed on her way.

But earlier Jesus told the disciples "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles." Was this deliberate a story for the benefit of his disciples? Had Jesus realised the woman had picked him up on his own preaching. She certainly made a point which was surely persistent in her still talking to Jesus, it made Jesus look right at her. He answers her: "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." We know, from other gospel stories, that sometimes Jesus seems to say that a sick person only gets healed if they have enough faith. But Jesus' own words to his disciples indicate that it is the healer, not the patient, that needs to have faith. Outside of the church, people don't talk about faith every day. Instead they talk of people trying over and over again to work for something they really want. That is what Jesus saw in this woman. She just would not let it go, begging for help. She followed him, even as he ignored her. She threw herself to her knees right in front of him. She begged him "Lord, help me" and questioned him. Many times Jesus points to the women -- bleeding, broken, Over and over, he saw that these women would not give up. They followed him, shouting out. They begged. They persisted. Until they got what they wanted, what they needed. Until Jesus made them whole again. Can we do the same?

MP 329

In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north,  
but one great family bound by love throughout the whole wide earth.

In him shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find:  
His service is the golden cord close binding humankind.

Join hands, disciples in the faith, Whate'er your race may be!  
Who serve each other in Christ's love are surely kin to me.

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.

**Benediction.**

May God be gracious to us and bless us. May God's face shine upon us as we go out from here to make God's ways known upon the Earth. To praise God in our homes and in our streets to bring God's gladness and joy to our nations and neighbours. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and forevermore.