

Written Service Sunday August 20th 2023
A service of worship for use at home
Prepared by Rev'd David Speed

Charity number 1134226

"I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths" (from Psalm 30)

Hymn - Singing the Faith 58 Lord I come before your throne of grace

Lord, I come before your throne of grace;
I find rest in your presence
and fullness of joy.
In worship and wonder I behold your face,
singing, 'What a faithful God have I.'

*What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.
What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.*

Lord of mercy, you have heard my cry;
through the storm you're the beacon,
my song in the night.
In the shelter of your wings hear my heart's
reply,
singing, 'What a faithful God have I.'

What a faithful God have I...

3. Lord all-sovereign, granting peace from
heaven,
let me comfort those who suffer
with the comfort you have given.
I will tell of your great love for as long as I
live,
singing, 'What a faithful God have I.'

What a faithful God have I...

Prayers

Let us pray, O Lord, in your strength, in your greatness, Lord, in your love,
We cannot undo our pasts or magic things away as if they had never happened, but we ask you
from the bottom of the heart, would you write straight with our crooked lines? Will you make
something beautiful out of the mistakes of our lives?
Teach us to live at peace with you, to make peace with others, and even with ourselves.
Give us fresh vision. Let us experience your love so deeply that we are free to face the future with
a steady eye, forgiven, and strong in hope.

The Lord's Prayer - We pray the prayer that Jesus taught us...

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.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hymn - Singing the Faith 447 Jesus, be the Centre
Jesus, be the Centre, be my source, be my light, Jesus.

*Be the fire in my heart,
Be the wind in these sails;
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus.*

Jesus, be the centre, be my hope, be my song, Jesus.

Chorus

Jesus, be my vision, be my path, be my guide, Jesus.

Chorus

Reading - Psalm 133

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹ How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!

² It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.

³ It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

Hymn - Singing the Faith 615 Let love be real

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert
pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go:

*as God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands,
just open hands and space to grow.*

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us
free;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are
weakness,
give me your love in spite of all you know:

as God loves us, ...

Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and
disappointments,
give me your trust when all my failings show:
as God loves us, ...

Prayers, of Thanksgiving and Intercession,

Let us pray,

Lord, when we thank you for your love and involvement where people face crises, where people see love, thank you for not giving up on your world. We picture the news that we have heard, hardly any good, but news channels think good news bores us, the scenes from the news, from Hawaii, Japan, Ukraine/Russia, Israel/Palestine, and we offer them to you in prayer. Teach us, and our world, O Lord, that the cost of pride, and greed, is a small price to pay for a wider peace.

We hold before you, Lord, those for whom life is very difficult, those who have difficult decisions to make, and who do not know what is the best thing to do.

We hold before you those who have difficult tasks to do and to face, and who fear that they may feel. Those who have difficult temptations to face, and who fear that they may fail to overcome them.

We hold before you those who must suffer unfairness and worse, and any who are disappointed for something they hoped for very much. We hold before you, young people who have received the result of their examinations, for those who have done better than they hoped, and for those who have not. If opportunities are blocked, help them to see other possibilities.

We hold ourselves before you in health and lack of health, in our hopes and disappointments, and leave all this before your greater strength, and wisdom.

Amen.

Reading, Matthew 15:21-28

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.

Hymn - Singing the Faith 682 God of grace and God of glory

1 God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your pow'r;
crown your ancient Church's story,
bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

2 Lo, the hosts of evil round us
scorn the Christ, assail his ways.
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

3 Cure your children's warring madness;
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
lest we miss your kingdom's goal,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

4 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

COPING WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE

On days when a weak moment has led me in the direction of Sainsbury's store, I see the words beside some products slightly more expensive than the rest, "Taste the Difference."

Once, I thought we weren't very good at that in Britain. Do you remember when we all had for our Sunday lunch meat, and two veg? You won't change British eating habits but now they even invented a special different dish for British tastes. 'Chicken Tikka'. Now, I eat salsa and hummus. Thai, Mexican, and Mediterranean Restaurants sprout up. We seem to cope with differing countries' menus but how do we cope with different people, people different in background, people different in thinking. I hope you'll agree that the story of the Canaanite woman helps us.

How do we cope with people of a different background – those who come from a different background, place, and lifestyle?

We remembered the Windrush generation recently, yet someone from around that time said of his experience in Nottingham, in the words of his time, said, "I did not know I was coloured until the English told me so".



Things have moved on since then. I could take you to a choir where people do not notice the pigmentation of their skin? They see something greater. They see each other as people.

We treat each other equally. This means keeping our sense of discernment.

The Canaanite woman was of a different background from Jesus. She says she wants her daughter healed. Jesus, in the end, does as she wants. But not before he asks, "What does she really want?"

"Does she want to be a victim?", to talk about how she has suffered, "Is she about her daughter being healed or does she have faith in Him?" Once he is satisfied that she is genuine, he accepts her.

It means seeing the person, not the stereotype. The word, Canaanite, was used to describe those people who were opposed to Israel in the Old Testament. Jesus though he sounds a little harsh to our ears in the way he talks, finally treats the Canaanite woman as a person not as a stereotype. It is so easy to label people.

You know how an Englishman went to France for the first time, saw at Calais a hunchbacked French porter, and wrote in his diary, "The French are a hunchbacked race".

We ask what it means to treat people as people but with discernment as we consider asylum seekers.

It means being open. Open to listening. Jesus was open to what the Canaanite lady said, and let it affect what he did.

Do you not feel that we should be open to what those who seem to be different from us might have to say?

You and I know how the joy of those who are educationally challenged when they take part in worship inspires. They give us a gift that we cannot give.

An American lad always said the wrong thing. Once when a large group of people processed down the town, he cried out, "Parade, Parade". It was a funeral procession. He could have been discounted.

Yet when the evangelist came to the Church, and made an appeal, he was the first to go forward. He showed the rest something of what it meant to respond immediately in faith.

There is much more to a person than a stereotype. The Palestinian scholar, **Edward Said wrote, "A race, a gender, neither is the beginning or an end of a person"**.

How do we cope with different people? Yes, accept them as we would accept anyone else. That will mean keeping our sense of discernment.

It will mean seeing the person not the stereotype.

Until we can embrace that, which is different about them.

Until we can see how what is different can enrich us. Our culture, I believe, has been enriched by the contribution of so many races in our land. If we wish others to accept what we have, then we must be open to what they give.

Jeremy Paxman, the broadcaster, now sadly unwell, writes that the guardians of the English language are always reared to receive new words into the dictionary, and this is why the English language has retained its place as the language spoken throughout the world. As the English dictionary takes in new words, why not the English people? As the late lamented broadcaster, George Alagaiah wrote, "The test of contribution is colour blind", and every other background blind, too.

Dame Edith was a national treasure before the word was used. She was the Dame Judi Dench of her time. When she was interviewed in later life, she said, "The trouble with growing old is that you tend to fall down a lot. I've learnt the trick, though. When you fall down at my age, the great secret is not to get up too quickly. Just lie there. Have a look at the world from a different angle".

It's not easy, but it would be great if we could do it, look at the world from an angle which is different from our own. I think that is part of what is meant by embracing that and those who are different. Jesus did that when he looked at life through the Canaanite woman's eyes. I believe He calls us to do the same. It means embracing that which is different.



Jesus embraces how the Canaanite lady expresses her faith. He calls his followers to be prepared to embrace the contribution of those who are different in background.

HOW DO WE COPE WITH THOSE OF DIFFERENT THINKING?

Now we can't agree with everything everyone says. There are certain things we feel we have to believe, but maybe not as many as we once thought. **Somebody said that as I get older I find I believe less things but those I do believe I believe more.**

The Canaanite woman did not believe in the right things. She called Jesus, son of David, but she doesn't seem to have been a Jew, yet after their conversation, when she acknowledges that Jesus has to go to those of Israel first and does not mind being referred to by the word, 'dog', which was an insult, Jesus has time to heal her daughter, and pays tribute to her faith.

The Canaanite woman, and the Roman Centurion both did not believe all the right things but Jesus said that they had greater faith in Him than anyone else he had met. In the Communion Service, in the prayer of Humble Access, we remember the Canaanite woman. "We do not deserve to gather up the crumbs underneath your table". She gave us the phrase, and she reminds us to have the same faith as she in Jesus meets our greatest need - forgiveness. She, who did not believe the right things.

Are we, as Jesus, open to the contribution of those who think differently from us, and who do not, we think, believe all the right things?

I came across this quote from the Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai." From the place where we are right, flowers will never grow in the spring".

If we insist that we are right, we cannot take in the experience and insight of those who think differently. The flower of understanding withers. What may we learn if we look at faith through someone else's eyes?

John Wesley, on his travels, said of one congregation, though I'm sure things have changed by now. "There is seldom fear of wanting a congregation in Scotland. But the misfortune is that they know everything so they learn nothing".

Can we be too quick to say, "The Bible says"?

Someone once questioned the scholar, A. S. Peake's views by saying, "The Bible says". He replied, "So that settles it, does it?"

We may feel we have the Biblical view on something. Can there not be other Biblical views? May we need the person who disagrees with us to show us? Do we need to look at these and see if they fit what Christ was all about?

Many people of the time thought of the Canaanite woman as 'unclean' because she didn't follow Jewish practices. Jesus has just said before this incident that it is not the external stuff, that which is outside of a person, that makes him unclean or clean but what comes from inside. He has seen what is inside this lady and found great faith there. We don't have to agree with a view different

from us, so long as we are open to the truth, open to the truth having more strands than we considered, and open to the other person's faith. The Canaanite woman's faith is what leads to the healing of her daughter. She is not asked to observe the Jewish Law or to believe the right things. Faith is enough. It may be that sometimes we all make believing the right things a little too important. Perhaps, to follow Jesus means to stress much more each other's faith than their right beliefs.

If our Lord valued the contribution of someone who thought differently from Him, can we not do the same? Our Lord shows us the importance of valuing the contributions of those from a different background, those who think differently from us. He shows us how to cope with differences. COPING WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN BACKGROUND, IN THINKING. So, Pause, Consider. Are we going Jesus' way or is there some more to be done? AMEN.

Hymn - Singing the Faith 662 Have you heard God's voice

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart
been stirred?
Are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice to remain and
serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you
much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?
Will you trust in One who entrusts to
you
the disciples of tomorrow?*

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?
Will you make a choice to stand your ground
when the crowds are turning violent?
Will you walk the path...

In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships
start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?
Will you walk the path...

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
and believe it could be different?
Will you share your views using words of
grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us
much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.*

Blessing

Lord, as we follow you where we did not think we would,
along trains of thought that we did not think we would catch,
may the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. AMEN.