

Sunday Morning Worship

16 August 2020

From the United Reformed Churches at Morpeth,
Widdrington and Gt Bavington.

Opening Words

"How good and pleasant it is,
when God's people live together in unity.
It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life for evermore. " Psalm 133:1,3

Hymn: In Christ there is no east or west

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.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord,
Close binding humankind.

Join hands, then, all the human race,
Whatever your nation be!
all who my Father's image bear
are surely kin to me.

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.

John Oxenham

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Prayer

Lord Jesus

We come to worship today scattered
in all our different places.
From east and west, and north and south,
we gather together to praise you
and to listen to your word.

We gather to be fed by you,
both by the scripture
and in the communion bread.
You are the bread of life,
and all who come to you
may never be hungry.

We come believing we know
where we have come from,

and who we are.

But the truth is we are of mixed heritage
and we often forget the common humanity
of which we are part.

Forgive us, when we call people "other"
and when we believe your grace
is available to some, and not to all.

Be with us today,
bless us with a sense of your presence,
and encourage us by your word
so that we may go from our places,
and share with others,
that which we have received from you.

We pray in Jesus name,
AMEN

Reading: Genesis 45:1-15

Reading Matthew 15:10-28

Sermon

Our reading from Matthew today follows on from our
gospel reading last week where Jesus sent the disciples
to the other side of the lake, and when a storm arose,
Jesus comes to them and after encouraging Peter to
step out onto the water, causes the storm to cease.

If you watched last weeks service, you will have heard
me talk about the significance of 'going to the other
side' and stepping out into the unknown to take the
gospel message.

Today's reading explore this theme a little further, as
we see here the story of a Canaanite woman, a non-
Jew, who comes to Jesus for healing and is told initially
that Jesus was sent "only to the lost sheep of Israel".

Our Bible studies too have been following the Apostle
Paul on his missionary journeys, and we have seen how
Paul when he comes to a new place, first goes to the
synagogue to share the gospel with the Jews, before
taking it to the Gentiles.

Our readings today challenge any perceptions we have
of who the gospel is for, and who it is not. And we see
how God works through, and for, those who we might
have already disregarded.

But first, lets look at the passage of Genesis and the
familiar story of Joseph and his brothers - thanks
mainly to Andrew Lloyd Webber, it is a story of a
colourful coat, sibling rivalry, and ultimately forgiveness
and family bonds.

Today in the reading from Genesis, the brothers have proved themselves by showing family loyalty when Benjamin is in danger of being punished. And they discover that their brother Joseph, who they believed was dead, was in fact the one they have come to begging for food.

There are no direct correlations between this story and the gospel story, but it is interesting how in both stories it is Canaanites who are seeking. In Genesis, the brothers come from their home in Canaan to Egypt seeking food. In the gospel, a Canaanite woman comes seeking healing for her daughter and engages in a conversation about scraps of bread from the table.

In one story the Canaanites represent Israel themselves, in the other the Canaanite is the enemy of Israel.

In one story the brothers seek salvation from those who will ultimately make them slaves, in the other the woman seeks salvation from the one who will ultimately make her free.

But ultimately in both stories, God sees the needs of those who come asking and provides what it is they need.

In that Genesis story, Joseph says to his brothers, "God sent me ahead of you to preserve a remnant on earth." God makes good out of a bad situation, and his will is fulfilled despite the brother's best attempts to thwart it.

That word 'remnant' is full of meaning for the people of Israel. In the times of Isaiah the 'remnant' were those people who returned from exile, who will return to God, and carry with them the hope for the future. They are the ones who are come from a place of need, but recognizes that they trust in God alone for their salvation.

Joseph's brothers come as the remnant, who carry with them the hope for the future of Jacob's family, seeking food to survive. And Joseph reminds them that God has worked things to this point, so that they might come and receive the salvation they are looking for.

The gospel reading began by recounting a discussion between the Pharisees and Jesus, where their lack of acceptance of Jesus' message results in Jesus calling them hypocrites who have themselves upheld tradition over and against the word of God.

This sets up the next encounter with this Canaanite woman who recognize Jesus as "Lord" and "Son of David" and comes to him in her time of need. Those who heard this story will recognize the significance of

calling her a Canaanite, an enemy of Israel. For when Israel entered the promised land, it was the Canaanites that were driven from the land.

Jesus has travelled to Phoenecia, to the region near Tyre and Sidon in which the Canaanites reside. And this woman recognizes Jesus as Lord and Saviour, whereas the Jews, did not recognize the authority of Jesus. She becomes the remnant. Those that turn to God in their need, and carry with them the hope for the future. She pleads for crumbs from the table of God's covenant people, and her faith is rewarded.

This passage begins by tackling what is clean and what is unclean. And how the Pharisees have upheld man made laws rather than God's law. And then moves to unclean territory, to then illustrate that those man made distinctions of who is clean and unclean, who is worthy and who is not, bear no weight in the eyes of God.

God's salvation is firstly for the Jews, but is for everyone, for all those who believe and call upon Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

God's love, God's salvation, is abundant. There is no need to ration. They may feast at the table, and there are plenty of leftovers, for all to eat and be satisfied.

I encourage you to read to the end of the chapter, as the crowds follow Jesus again, bringing the lame, the blind and the crippled, and seeing them healed, praise the God of Israel.

And then after three days, of having nothing to eat, Jesus says he does not want to send them away hungry. And taking seven loaves, and a few small fish, he feeds the 4000 gathered there. And they all ate and were satisfied. And afterwards the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of leftovers.

God's love is abundant.
God's love is without limit.

We do not need to worry about who is and who is not worthy to receive his love.

We do not need to construct man made laws about who is acceptable and who is not.

We see that God's grace is sufficient.
That all may come to God in their need and receive the salvation they look for.

And in this remnant.
In these who return to God in their need, and trust in him alone, the hope for the future resides. As God's

kingdom is established, his gospel is shared and his will is fulfilled.

AMEN

Hymn: O bread to pilgrims given

O Bread to pilgrims given,
O Food that angels eat,
O Manna sent from heaven,
For heav'n-born natures meet:
Give us, for thee long pining,
To eat till richly filled;
Till, earth's delights resigning,
Our every wish is stilled.

O water, life-bestowing
Forth from the Saviour's heart,
a fountain purely flowing,
a fount of love thou art.
O let us, freely tasting,
Our burning thirst assuage;
Thy sweetness, never wasting,
Avails from age to age.

Jesus, this feast receiving,
We thee unseen adore;
Thy faithful word believing,
We take, and doubt no more:
Give us, thou true and loving,
On earth to live in thee;
Then, death the veil removing,
Thy glorious face to see.

Ray Palmer (altd)

Communion

Prayers of intercession

Jesus, Lord, Son of David,
we pray for those who are hungry;
for those who are physically hungry,
for families that struggle to find the food they need,
for the homeless living off scraps thrown to them,
for those refugees who have fled their homes and now
living as strangers in a different land.
for those who are hungry through drought and climate
change, whose crops have failed and can no longer
grow the food they need to survive.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Jesus,
we pray for those who are hungry for happiness,
seeking to find fulfilment in material things,
and filling their days with endless activity in

hope that it will bring satisfaction in the end.
we pray for all those who seek pleasure at the expense
of others,
we pray for those who settle for momentary pleasure
and leave life emptyhanded and unsatisfied.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Jesus,
we pray for those who are constantly active
and who never find time to stop and be still.
We pray for those who never stop and take the time
to see themselves as they really are,
who have no time just to be,
to rest in your presence,
and to pray to you.
Come to them, and speak words of Peace,
so that you may still their restless lives.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Jesus
We pray for those who are hungry for peace,
and whose lives are disrupted by war and violence.
we pray for those whose lives are turbulent,
through guilt or failure,
through want or despair.
We pray for those who are hungry to know the peace of
God and to experience his presence and joy,
Christ, may your peace give them hope.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Jesus, we pray for those who hunger for love,
for those who are unappreciated, unwanted and
disregarded.
we pray for all those, like us, who need to know that
they are love, not for what they do or think,
but just for who they are.
We pray for all those who from early days have been
taught that love, especially your love, is something to
be earned or be worthy of,
May your Grace, enable them to know the abundant
love you offer, to everyone, and that they are accepted
and loved as they are right now.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer,

We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord
and Saviour, who taught us to say together....

The Lord's Prayer.

Hymn: Jesus Christ is waiting

Jesus Christ is waiting,
Waiting in the streets;
No one is his neighbour,
All alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger,
Fit to wait on you

Jesus Christ is raging,
Raging in the streets,
Where injustice spirals
And real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I am angry too.
In the Kingdom's causes
Let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing,
Healing in the streets;
Curing those who suffer,
Touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I have pity too.
Let my care be active,
Healing just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing,
Dancing in the streets,
Where each sign of hatred
He, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I should triumph too.
Where good conquers evil
Let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling,
Calling in the streets,
"Who will join my journey?
I will guide their feet."
Listen, Lord Jesus,
Let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me;
I will follow you.

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Blessing