

Worship@Home 07 August 2022

Prayer of Approach:

Here we are, O God, to meet you.
In Your Presence, dear Jesus, to seek you.
Praise and prayer, O God to give you.
Truth and love, O Christ, to live for.
Young and old, Jesus, to trust you.
Each one seeking, Christ Jesus, to serve you.
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us now.
Amen.

Jesus be the centre (SF 447)

<https://youtu.be/kq1AJxftCk>

Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light, Jesus.

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

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

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

Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light, Jesus.

Prayer Confession and Thanksgiving:

We know that you are Love and that you love all that you have made. You love each one of us. Jesus, you showed us by your life and told us in your own words that God will never turn anyone away. However, our lives are far from perfect. We know that we are not the best we can be or the best you O God longs us to be. Sin has spoilt our lives and your world. We deliberately make choices to do what saddens you. But you accept us as we are but love us too much to leave us as we are. This is why you ask us to come to Jesus and say sorry.

Silent confessions

Jesus says, "If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me, and I will give you rest". So we bring all that we are to you, Jesus - all our sins and our failure to love. Thank you that you died for us so that we might be forgiven and start a new life in the power of your Holy Spirit.

May we journey on without burden or guilt, knowing you forgive us and provide us with a fresh start. **Amen.**

Please read:

Leviticus 19: 9-10

Mark 7: 24-37

Time to Reflect

Today's Gospel reading is a tough one. The way Jesus treats the woman in this story seems most uncharacteristic, and really quite rude. She is a Gentile, and at first, Jesus refers to her as a dog!

There are a number of different ways to interpret this response. Some feel that Jesus was testing her to see whether she had the faith to stick to her guns. Some feel that Jesus was pretending to treat her badly to highlight the racism of his own people. Others believe that Jesus had a transforming moment where this woman made him realise that his mission was not just for the Jews.

Whatever we may believe about this encounter, what becomes clear is that Jesus finally welcomes this poor, Gentile woman and heals her daughter.

What does it mean to make room for those who are not like us? The call to make room for the stranger is not new. The OT makes it clear in Leviticus 19: 9-10. And in the Book of Ruth, this is carried out in practice by Boaz, ending in a Romantic encounter.

It is worth spending a bit of time considering how we as individuals and churches react to strangers. Churches tend to attract people like themselves. During the 1990's there was a major emphasis on cell church: Paul Yonggi Cho spoke about inviting people with the same interests, who think like you into small groups. I have always been very uncomfortable with that. I am always confronted with the question: What makes it difficult to make room for people who are not like us? Mother Theresa said that she saw Christ in each person she met and worked with.

The problem with us is that we always include some and exclude others. Mr. Brown sees Paddington on the station platform (and because he looks different), he warns his family: "Ooh, stranger danger. Keep your eyes down. – there is some sort of bear over there!" Then he makes a generalisation: "He is probably selling something!" They then walk past him. He feels rejected and then starts self-blaming: "I must be doing something wrong," he says. ~

It is Mrs. Brown who then starts engaging with Paddington and eventually offers him assistance.

This brings me to Jesus and the Gentile woman: it is when this lady engages Jesus (there is a conversation between them), that Jesus is convinced and greater understanding comes. In fact, Jesus teaches us how to lose an argument. When he realises that the woman's argument is stronger than his own, he grants her petition.

Jesus seems to be prepared to change his mind in our gospel reading today. Do you view changing one's mind as a sign of weakness or of strength?

After his encounter here, he then returns to a Jewish region and heals a deaf-mute man. It seems pretty clear that the Gospel writer wants us to recognise that Jesus was radically inclusive in his ministry.

This teaches me that one of the most powerful things we can do in our world is to talk to others (who seem different from us and who hold different convictions than us). In so doing we can learn from each other and become radically inclusive like Jesus.

You too have welcomed us as a family here in Northampton. And we have shaped each other through our interactions and conversations. As I leave you, I appeal to you to continue to welcome others into the church family. I leave you with a question: Who do you need to welcome and include today?

Friends, being inclusive doesn't mean that we have to be close friends with everyone - that just isn't humanly possible. But, if we treat everyone we meet with kindness and respect, and take time to recognise their basic humanity, we are living as welcoming, inclusive Christ-followers. Try it today.

Prayers of Solidarity

God of invitation, we thank you for your presence in our lives. We pray that you would give us open doors and open hearts, sharing hospitality in your name.

We pray for those who have been rejected or made unwelcome, those who struggle to fit in, and those who do not know what it is to be loved. **Show them your love, and help us to be carriers of your compassion.**

We thank you for those who have been our Welcomers, those who make such a difference in ways seen or unseen, those ready to give, to share, who stretch out their arms to those in need. **Bless and strengthen them; and help us to show our gratitude and support.**

We pray for those in power and authority, that they would see what needs doing to help the poorest and most vulnerable. **Help them to act on it, that the world may become a kinder and fairer place.**

We pray that as you walk beside us, we would draw strength from you, and grow in knowledge of you, that our hearts too might burn within us. **We pray all these things in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.**

Our Father...

Hear the call of the Kingdom (StF 407)

<https://youtu.be/rIPxUNOrTYU>

Hear the call of the Kingdom

Lift your eyes to the King

Let His song rise within you

As a fragrant offering

Of how God rich in mercy

Came in Christ to redeem

All who trust in His unfailing grace

Hear the call of the Kingdom

To be children of light

With the mercy of heaven

The humility of Christ

Walking justly before Him

Loving all that is right

That the life of Christ may shine through us

King of Heaven we will answer the call

We will follow bringing hope to the world

Filled with passion filled with power to proclaim

Salvation in Jesus' name

Hear the call of the Kingdom

To reach out to the lost

With the Father's compassion

In the wonder of the cross

Bringing peace and forgiveness

And a hope yet to come

Let the nations put their trust in Him

Blessing

God of glory, go before us. Walk with us.

Remind us of the profound reality of a life

infused with your love. Let us be witnesses to

you, whatever roads we travel, sharing the

good news and celebrating the enduring hope

we have. In Jesus' name. Amen.