

## **Worship at Home service Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023 with Deacon Richard Beckett**

### **Call to worship:**

God reveals himself to each and every person regardless of background, culture, theology and ethnicity. As we worship, may our hearts and minds be open to the needs of our neighbours, friends, families and colleagues. Amen

### **StF 430 My lips shall praise you**

[\(1\) My Lips shall praise You - YouTube](#)

*My lips shall praise you, my great Redeemer,  
My heart will worship, almighty Saviour.*

You take all my guilt away.  
Turn the darkest night to brightest day,  
You are the restorer of my soul.

Love that conquers every fear,  
in the midst of trouble you draw near,  
you are the restorer of my soul.

You're the source of happiness,  
bringing peace when I am in distress,  
you are the restorer of my soul.

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Almighty God, from ancient times you have reminded your people to listen to the cries of those excluded or marginalised; and through Jesus you have expanded your people Israel to include us, with an invitation to all the world.

Thank you for your generous and caring nature. Help us to mirror it in our lives and actions, as we hear with your ears, see with your eyes, and love with your heart.

We praise you for your arms outstretched to save the lost, to include the excluded, to raise those the world despises. You are God of the outcast and stranger, welcoming all, making friends of foes.

Amen. (From Roots Resources)

## **Bible reading**

Matthew 15:10-28

### **Time to reflect:**

This woman who approached Jesus faced many obstacles. Let's think for a moment what those obstacles might have been for her:

The woman knew herself to be as low as a dog in the eyes of the Jews.

She knew of the history of her own people – a people who lived in the land of Palestine before the Israelites arrived many years before and named the land of Canaan 'The promised Land'. It's ironic in a way that she would have been seen as an 'outsider' by the Jews.

Her people's religion was hugely different from that of the Jews. She and her people did not believe in one God, they believed in many – probably around 234 deities in fact, like other peoples of the near East. The God Baal was just one of these and temples and shrines were built to honour the many gods.

For such a woman to address Jesus in the way she did is surprising - 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me'.

This is not her religion, yet she recognises Jesus for who he is in those words.

Are they the words I use when I approach Jesus in prayer?

How do I feel when I say those words? They are truly words of Christian confession – even before I begin to make my list of requests to Jesus.

Say those words for yourself now: 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me'. Personally, I am reluctant to begin my prayers with confession!

When I hear a leader or preacher say, "Now a few moments of silence for our own confessions", I think – these moments are never going to be long enough for me!

And Jesus response to the woman? He did not answer her at all! A 'Roaring silence' as I once heard it described. Nothing, not a word. Surely the woman's contrite approach to Jesus will elicit a positive response. But nothing!

But as always – Jesus *does* respond. He says "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel".

But is that a helpful response to this woman's request?

It sounds more like a rebuff, like saying “*You* are not one of the lost sheep of Israel, therefore I cannot help you”!

Jesus knew that his mission was first to the people of Israel – his mission was limited but his goals were clear.

There is a school of thought that here in his response Jesus is thinking out loud, questioning his mission which was to the people of Israel. Should he make an exception in the case of great need such as this woman had and respond with compassion?

So, she then kneels before Jesus (or as Mark’s version of this story goes, she threw herself at Jesus’ feet!) and She tries again - “Lord, help me” – isn’t that the simplest of prayers. How often have we uttered those words when all else seems to fail?

Jesus’ next words seem even more harsh, suggesting again that his message is for Israel and anyone else outside of that group might benefit but it will only be scraps they get, just like dogs that might get scraps from the table.

But the woman (knowing herself to be one of those dogs) will make do with whatever Jesus can provide her with and it will be enough.

And Jesus sees her faith and does what she asks – and her daughter was healed instantly.

Oh, for that faith that is ready to step across boundaries that we create for ourselves: the very perception that our faith is not as strong as it should be; the idea that we are not good enough; the notion that our background in some way inhibits us and the thinking that we don’t have anything to contribute.

Jesus’ compassion cuts through obstacles such as these and needs are met.

### **A prayer of intercession**

Lord, the Canaanite woman sought your help. She loved her daughter so much, she was so desperately in need, that she wouldn’t give up till she had her answer.

We pray in faith.

Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

Lord, may we learn from this woman, to wait on you expectantly, patiently, persistently, doggedly. Grant us the courage of our convictions when we truly believe we are doing your will.

We pray in faith.

Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

We pray today for those who feel excluded, whatever their situation, whatever the reason: for prisoners, refugees, the homeless; for the sick, the mentally unstable; for any who feel that they are outsiders.

We pray in faith.

Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

We pray for ourselves when our faith is weak, or we feel that we don't belong.

We pray in faith.

Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.

Amen. (Adapted from Roots Resources)

### **StF 489 All I once held dear**

[\(1\) All I once held dear - Robin Mark - YouTube](#)

All I once held dear, built my life upon,  
All this world reveres and wars to own.  
All I once thought gain, I have counted loss  
Spent and worthless now compared to this:

*Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You,  
There is no greater thing.*

*You're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness,  
and I love You, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire is to know You more.  
To be found in You, and known as Yours  
To possess by faith what I could not earn,  
All-surpassing gift of righteousness.

Oh, to know the power of Your risen life,  
And to know You in your sufferings.  
To become like You in Your death, my Lord,  
So with You to live and never die.

## **Closing Prayer**

O God, you open your arms wide to all of us.

Help us trust that you really do love us,  
the real deep-down us, warts and all.

Nothing we can do can stop you loving us.

If, like the Canaanite woman, we dare to believe,  
may your healing love flow through us to the hurting,  
so we may hear singing in heaven! **Amen.**

(Prayer from Roots Resources)