

Worshipping Together : Apart
Sunday 20th June 2021 at 10.30am
Church; Physically Distanced but Spiritually United
Worship Prepared by Rev. Janine Atkinson

A Call to Worship God

Praise the God of life and death,
whose mercies are new every morning.
Wait for the salvation of our God,
who turns our sorrow into joy,
and sets our spirits dancing.

Hymn – R&S 536 MP 480: *John Keble (1792-1866) altd.**

New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.

New mercies each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
as more of heaven in each we see;
some softening gleam of love and prayer
shall dawn on every cross and care.

The trivial round, the common task
will furnish all we ought to ask.
Lord, help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray.

Approaching God in Prayer

Living God,

I thank you that you greet me and call me by name.

Touch me with your love,

and help me to praise and to serve you.

Transforming God, I reach out to you in prayer,

and to touch the source of grace that I find in you.

Meet me now, and turn my sadness to joy,

my sickness to healing, and my mourning into dancing.

Embodied God,

I praise you for the wonderful mysteries of our bodies.

I thank you for our senses:

for sight and sound, for smell and taste and touch.

I thank you for the joys of movement:

of walking, running and dancing,

I thank you for the joys of touch:

tender holding, passionate embrace,

sharing with one another.

Embodied God,

I thank you that in Jesus you took on human flesh

in all its frailty and vulnerability.

I know that sometimes the body is a source of shame, embarrassment
or limitation.

We praise you, that even in the vulnerability of our bodies,

you are there, sharing our weakness and bearing our pain.

Embodied God,

I thank you for the power and vulnerability

of the human body.

Merciful God, who breaks through all taboos,

forgive me when I exclude others

because I am frightened of difference.
Forgive me when I label others
and accept stereotypes without thinking.
Forgive me when I push people to the edge,
treating them as if they are of little value or worth.

Welcoming God, you accept everyone,
help me to share in the generosity and open handedness of your
welcome,
and to share the abundant love shown by Jesus, who shared with us
words we can pray

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.

Psalm 30

- ¹ I will exalt you, Lord, for you rescued me.
You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.
- ² O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you restored my health.
- ³ You brought me up from the grave, O Lord.
You kept me from falling into the pit of death.
- ⁴ Sing to the Lord, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.
- ⁵ For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.
- ⁶ When I was prosperous, I said, "Nothing can stop me now!"
- ⁷ Your favour, O Lord, made me as secure as a mountain.
Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered.

⁸ I cried out to you, O Lord.

I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,

⁹ "What will you gain if I die, if I sink into the grave?

Can my dust praise you? Can it tell of your faithfulness?

¹⁰ Hear me, Lord, and have mercy on me.

Help me, O Lord."

¹¹ You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.

You have taken away my mourning clothes and clothed me with joy,

¹² so that I might sing praises to you and not be silent.

O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever!

Bible Reading – Mark 5: 21 – 43

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' ²⁹ Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' ³¹ And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?"' ³² He looked all round to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell

down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.



Setting the Scene - Spot the similarities!

Do you ever do 'spot the difference' puzzles? The tricky business of studying 2 pictures to find, say 6 differences between them - a different nose, a stripy sock, a handkerchief in one pocket but not the

other, a duck in the background. I don't know about you, but there's always one difference difficult to find – I can often find 5 but not the 6th.

This story is similar, there are stark differences - and we'll think about those later - but the opposite is also true! It's also a spot the similarities puzzle - so I wonder if you spotted any?

Answers on the back page - again!

The Gospel writer Mark would have made a very good television script writer, because he used a technique often used in TV dramas

Do you watch 'Casualty'? Quite often there's an incident of some sort that sheds light on a problem or subject that a regular member of the cast is facing. Hearing someone else's story or supporting them during their time in hospital seems to shed some light onto the issue that our main character is facing, or it illuminates something that's going on elsewhere in A&E. This technique is called 'intercalation', which means to 'put something between two layers of something else' - a fancy name for a sandwich. And Mark was a 'sandwich-maker'. The stories of Jairus's daughter and the haemorrhaging woman make a sandwich.

Jesus abandons an intriguing storyline and diverts into something fresh - then goes back a little later to pick up where he left off - this is not a careless thing Jesus does, it's purposeful and potent.

As Jesus hurries to Jairus' house, he's delayed by a woman in the crowd. His encounter with her interrupts his response to Jairus, and it's only when she is healed that he goes on to Jairus' house.

Imagine being there at the time - or hearing this story for the first time... will he be too late to save Jairus' daughter? It seems as though one miracle has got in the way of another! But in the event Jesus is able to heal both the haemorrhaging woman and bring the young girl back to life.

Jesus' time is different from ours. And Jesus always has time for the lowest and the least and the confidence that all things will be well - no matter how much time he gives here or there. Jesus always has time.

Hymn – R&S 349 MP 275: *H. Bonar (1808-89) altd.**

I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down your head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was, forlorn and faint and sad;
I found in him a resting-place, and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'I am this dark world's light;
look unto me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk, till travelling days are done.

Reflections

Just like in an episode of 'Casualty', the similarities and differences in these stories shed light on each other, as well as on Jesus.

The 12 years seems to bracket the two together - the girl has been growing for 12 years towards the threshold of adult life. 12 years is her lifetime. The woman has spent all those 12 years - a lifetime in effect - grieving for the healthy womanhood she has lost.

She was edged out of society because of her illness which had made her 'impure'. She had no one to plead her cause for her. She was ostracised and destitute - she shouldn't even have been *in* the crowd! No wonder she owned up in fear and trembling when Jesus insisted on knowing who had touched him

Jesus drew attention to her, and strikingly *also* to himself as he spoke publicly about the means of her healing. According to Jewish Law, Jesus was now ritually unclean. The woman had contaminated him and, unwittingly, Jesus had broken religious law by touching someone who was unclean.

In calling the woman 'daughter' he was demonstrating that she 'belonged' now and no-one should exclude her again. Jesus brought her from the 'outside' of society to the 'inside'. By calling her 'daughter' Jesus told the crowd that this 'outcast' woman was a precious child of God, and he praised her actions in seeking him out. She is given an identity

By contrast the girl was an 'insider'. She belonged to a home at the very centre of community life. Her father had power and wealth, he was a leader of the synagogue, a well-respected figure in society who could command respect from others. Yet Jesus dealt discretely and privately with their situation. There was nothing that anyone need know about her healing, except that she was well again.

But again, in healing her, Jesus had made himself ritually unclean. He had touched a girl! Not *only* a girl but a dead girl, both forbidden under Jewish Law.

Touch plays its part in both stories - the woman touches Jesus and Jesus touches the girl.

The power of touch is significant, sometimes it's more effective than words alone. One of the things I've noticed these past months is the grief that's difficult to soothe at funerals whilst hugging has been 'forbidden'. Sometimes we need to hug before the words can come.

But touch can both heal *and* harm, so touch must be used with caution, care and wisdom. Many people have cause to be worried by or afraid of being touched.

Now we don't know the names of either the girl or the woman, but one is a daughter who lives to become a woman, while the other is a woman who becomes a daughter. She is restored to family status when Jesus calls her 'daughter'.

The two characters can also stand for the contrast between privilege and exclusion. The 'privileged' one has to wait until the 'excluded' one is healed. But not only physically healed, she is also socially healed and restored. The woman will now be able to retake her place in society, no longer ritually unclean and excluded - edged out - but restored to life within the community that had excluded her.

So the two characters act as symbols of wider community life.

Because the two incidents stand sandwiched together, side-by-side, they shed light on each other, the layers of the sandwich that Mark has made sharpen one another's flavours.

Perhaps you have been able to notice some of the flavours of Jesus ministry in this sandwich and perhaps tasting it will help you to think about your own attitudes and responsibilities within community life.

I tell you to get up! *Terry Jin & Francis Brienen - Prayer Handbook 2015 p69*

Life-giving Jesus,
to a father and mother in anguish, you bring life and laughter,
to a woman drained of energy, you bring health and vigour,
to people who have ceased to hope, you bring joy and wonder.

Life-giving Jesus,
come to us when we have lost hope,
come to us when we no longer live with joy,
come to us when our energies are sapped,
come to us when suffering overwhelms us,
come to us when we fear for our children's future.

Come to us and touch us.

In your healing power may we rise to live in your light
and to rejoice in your love. Amen

Hymn – R&S 371: MP 624: *Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79)*

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Holding the World in Prayer

Lord God, you are the one who welcomes all,
you must be aching with sadness for all those we exclude or oppress.
So we lift to you in prayer those who are excluded or oppressed:
those who are pushed to the edge of society
those stuck in poverty and debt,
those lacking the resources to make choices;
those who experience discrimination because of their disability
or skin colour,
those denied opportunities for work, travel or relationship;
those who are invisible through prejudice or fear:
those with chronic illness or pain,
those with dementia whose care is under-resourced;
gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people whose loving

relationships or identity can be despised or denied,
those who are abused or suffer violence in secret shame;
those who lack the security of home:
refugees forced to flee by war or conflict,
those who live on our streets,
women and children forced into prostitution to survive.

And we also lift before you those people who bring your love
and hope into difficult and demanding situations
those who work to overcome prejudice and fear:
those who undertake the work of caring,
those who make compassionate decisions about resources,
those who break the silence to speak out against injustice,
those who campaign for change.

God, who welcomes all,
help us to reach beyond the limits that we impose,
to offer your hospitality to those on the edge of our communities,
and of our compassion.

I bring the people I know to you, to be touched by you
those you have given to me to love and to care for

And, Lord Jesus, I would love to reach out to you, touch the hem of
your cloak, because I also need to know your healing and your peace.
Amen.

Hymn – R&S 96: MP 200: *Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)*

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided,
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Closing Words and Blessing

Lord God, you have welcomed us as your people.

We have heard your words of love
and we have been touched by your grace.

May we reach beyond the limits of our compassion
to share your hospitality with friend and stranger.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore Amen

Spot the Similarities - answers!

- *Jairus' daughter was 12 years old / the woman had been ill for 12 years (the equivalent of the girl's lifetime - imagine that)*
- *The girl was Jairus' daughter / Jesus called the woman 'Daughter'*
- *We don't know the names of either the girl or the women*
- *The power of touch – the woman touched Jesus' cloak / Jesus touched the girl.*

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*Painting: The Raising of Jairus' Daughter - Gabriel von Max (1840-1915)
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