

ST STEPHEN'S HOME SERVICE

27th JUNE 2021

INTRODUCTION

Take a moment to think about this question: what image of God do you have in your mind when you pray, or when – as now – you come to worship?

Is He glad to see you, or slightly put-out at being disturbed? Does He have time to hear what's bothering you, or does He have weightier matters on His mind? (After all, He has a Universe to run, not to mention a whole world full of problems.)

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus responding to a life-or-death situation, and yet still making time to help a woman in real need. We get a glimpse of a God to whom each of us is important, who welcomes each of us as a beloved child of His – any time of night or day.

Allow yourself to rest in that image of God now.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever.

Be with us, Spirit of God;

Nothing can separate us from your love.

Breathe on us, breath of God;

Fill us with your saving power.

Speak in us, wisdom of God;

Bring strength, healing and peace.

The Lord is here.

His spirit is with us.

TURNING TO GOD

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.

Let us come to him, in sorrow for our sins, seeking healing and salvation.

God be gracious to us and bless us,
and make your face shine upon us;
Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

May your ways be known on the earth,
your saving power among the nations;
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You, Lord, have made known your salvation,
and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations;
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself
and cleanse us from all our sins,
That we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A SONG OF PRAISE TO GOD FOR HELP RECEIVED

I will exalt you, LORD, for you rescued me.
You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.
**O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you restored my health.**

You brought me up from the grave, O LORD.
You kept me from falling into the pit of death.
**Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.**

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.**

When I was prosperous, I said,
"Nothing can stop me now!"
**Your favour, O LORD, made me as secure as a mountain.
Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered.**

I cried out to you, O LORD.
I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,
**"What will you gain if I die,
if I sink into the grave?"**
Can my dust praise you?
Can it tell of your faithfulness?
**Hear me, LORD, and have mercy on me.
Help me, O LORD."**

You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.
You have taken away my clothes of mourning and
clothed me with joy,
**So I will sing praises to you and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever!**

Psalm 30

A CELEBRATION OF GOD'S POWER TO MAKE THINGS NEW

Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the word

Sweet the rains new fall, sunlit from Heaven
Like the first dewfall on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass

Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning
Born of the one light, Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day

Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the word

NEW TESTAMENT READING

2 Corinthians 8:7-15 (New Living Translation)

[St Paul is encouraging the Christians in Corinth to reflect on God's generosity in Christ, and to finish the job they had started of collecting money for other Christians in great need.]

Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.

You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. As the Scriptures say,

“Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over,
and those who gathered only a little had enough.”

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 5:21-end (New Living Translation)

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.
Glory to you, O Lord.

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 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." So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

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?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." 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. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you O Christ.

REFLECTION (by Lindsey Coulthard)

I wonder how many of you are fans of the TV programme MasterChef. Hosted by John Torode and Gregg Wallace, contestants both amateur and professional enter the competition in order to wow the chefs with their culinary

delights hoping to make the next round. And so it goes on until the grand final and the push for that coveted MasterChef trophy. There is always one round where contestants have to cook for a table of food critics and they really ramp up their offerings.

Frequently contestants will promise something like an apple and rhubarb crumble with custard and the judges will salivate and say - 'Oh yum – my old school favourite.' What they get in actual fact is nothing like their old school favourite because more often than not the dish has been 'deconstructed'.

And so in effect what they end up with is a fruit compote, a fruit gel, some dried apple pieces, a separate pot of crumbs and a fancy vanilla foam! Somehow in the process of deconstruction the yumminess of the crumble and custard has disappeared.

In a sense, that is what would happen today if I were to separate out the two stories that we hear about in our Gospel reading. St. Mark has presented us with one of his intercalations – a literary structure otherwise known as a 'sandwich.' The story of the woman with haemorrhages is literally sandwiched between the start and end of the story of Jairus' daughter. But why does Mark do this? Because he is wanting to make a point about something. So to deconstruct this particular Gospel reading would mean that we might miss a significant message that Mark is attempting to convey.

There are some symbolic parallels in this story when we read it as a whole; both victims of illness are female and both are ritually unclean, one as result of death and one as a result of haemorrhage. Both represent the significance of the number twelve in Jewish tradition – the girl being twelve years old and the woman having suffered for twelve years. Both are regarded as 'daughters'; the little girl being Jairus' daughter and the woman who is addressed by Jesus as 'Daughter'; and it's an act of touch that restores both the girl and the woman to new life.

A couple points we might like to consider about this story are firstly; who or what claims Jesus' time and attention? How does he determine the priority of people and things. Here, Jesus makes it clear that those who are most deserving of our attention may be the least visible ones. In ministering to the girl and the woman Jesus crosses all social and religious barriers. In his compassion he sees the needs of both of them and deems them as worthy of his attention as anyone else.

Over the past year or so I've heard many people share a worry or trouble and then immediately follow it up with - 'but there are far bigger problems in the world' or 'so and so is having a much harder time than I am'. And that may well be how we feel, sometimes we might try to trivialise our own problems thinking them small and insignificant by comparison with other peoples' worries. Don't get me wrong we certainly need to keep things in perspective, but this story is making the point that Jesus deems us - that's you and me, as worthy of

his attention as anyone else. He always has time and space for us.

The second point or perhaps question to consider is the matter of healing. What exactly does it mean to be healed? The haemorrhaging woman is healed when she reaches out and touches Jesus' robe, and Jairus' daughter is restored to life when Jesus takes her by the hand but we need to understand that to be healed is not necessarily to be cured. Albeit on this occasion both stories do have happy endings but you and I well know; that that is not always the reality of life. So perhaps a deeper healing or sense of wholeness is actually the point of these two stories.

For Jairus maybe part of his healing or wholeness was discovered in his loving his daughter so much he would do anything to secure her life. His wholeness was realised in his willingness to abandon everything that defined him: his position and his sense of pride, to name a few.....and to turn without shame to Jesus. Knowing it was only Jesus alone who could answer his deepest need. Perhaps Jairus was on his way to healing already even as he acknowledged and acted on his deep love for his child. And maybe, just maybe, I wonder if this story is actually more about Jairus than it is about his child?

In addition, the woman who was haemorrhaging is not only healed or made whole when her bleeding stops, but when she finally looks into the face of Jesus and engages in conversation with him. In that moment she is transformed

from an anonymous being (who felt she had to sneak up behind Jesus to receive healing) to one who was recognised and acknowledged by Jesus himself. She who had no name is now called 'daughter' by Jesus. To be sure, it seems her healing was not complete until then.

Some years ago I had a colleague who was diagnosed with cancer. She was quite open about the fact that she had no faith, but when she was diagnosed she wanted to talk to me because she was worried that she had 'turned her back' on Jesus and only wanted to seek his help now – in her desperation. She was concerned that Jesus might think less of her for turning to him only as a last resort.

Could it be that what Mark wants to share with us in this story is that even when we might only approach Jesus as a very last resort – just as the woman with haemorrhages does and just as Jairus does – he is waiting to engage with us, to nurture our healing and make us whole? What's more – this story also makes the point that you and I are just as worthy of Jesus' attention as anyone else.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end;

The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
To the soul that seeks him – no matter how long it takes.....

[Take a few moments to reflect on what you have read.]

RESPONDING IN FAITH

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven
and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

PRAYERS

Let us pray to our Heavenly Father,
In full confidence that He is always reaching out to us in
compassion,
And always has time for us.

Lord of all, wherever Christians are ridiculed
Or persecuted for their faith,

We ask your courage and inner strength;
Wherever we are called to be your witnesses,
We ask for the grace to communicate your love.
Wherever love for you has grown cold,
We ask to fan the flames again.

And today we pray especially for Danny Payne,
Being ordained deacon. May he and Malcolm
Know the protection of your Spirit,
And the support of your people.

Silence

Christ of the wounded hands
Renew us and make us whole.

Lord, wherever the human spirit is ground down by
oppression,
And wherever our silence allows injustice and corruption to
flourish,
We ask for deeper compassion and commitment;
We ask for our kingdoms to become your kingdom,
And the desires of your heart to be ours.

Silence

Christ of the wounded hands
Renew us and make us whole.

Lord of all
Wherever families are struggling to stay together,
And wherever there are ongoing arguments and family feuds,
We ask your anointing for tranquillity and harmony.
Wherever children are unwanted and unloved, neglected or in
danger,
We ask your protection and help.

Silence

Christ of the wounded hands
Renew us and make us whole.

Lord, wherever bodies, minds or spirits are wracked with pain,
Or too weak or exhausted to pray,
We ask the bathing love of your presence,
And the practical caring of hands working in your name.
Wherever there are doubts and the battle is strong,
We ask your empowering and clear guidance.
Among those known to us personally, we ask your blessing on
Geoff Hulland, Paul Burston, David New, Anna Clements, and
Adrina and Alan Price.

Silence

Christ of the wounded hands
Renew us and make us whole.

Lord of all
Wherever the dying are anxious or afraid,
We ask your peace;
Wherever the faithful have passed from this life into eternity,
We commend them to your unchanging and everlasting love.
We hold to your mercy any known to us who have died
recently.
And among those whose anniversaries fall at this time we
remember with love and gratitude: David Drew, Geoff
Stephens, Richard Wickham, Linda Hampton, Simon Bowen,
William Layton, Stuart Foster, Bryan Pardoe, and Marcus
Cairns-Terry.
May they rest in peace – and rise in glory.

Silence

Christ of the wounded hands
Renew us and make us whole.

Merciful Father,
**Accept these prayers
For the sake of your Son,
Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

We pray the Lord's Prayer together as Jesus taught us, saying:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily
bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.
Lead us not into
temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the
power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**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.**

**Transform our brokenness into blessing.
And as we go on our way,
May our minds be full of your peace,
our hearts full of your love,
and our thoughts full of your praise.**

**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.**

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SENDING

**Loving God, bring us all to life
by the power of your love.**