

Sunday Morning Worship
Readings and Prayers 30th June



Lamentations 3.22-33

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;

it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.

It is good for a man to bear the yoke
while he is young.

Let him sit alone in silence,
for the Lord has laid it on him.

Let him bury his face in the dust—
there may yet be hope.

Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him,
and let him be filled with disgrace.

For no one is cast off
by the Lord forever.

Though he brings grief, he will show compassion,
so great is his unfailing love.
For he does not willingly bring affliction
or grief to anyone.

This is the word of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 8.7-24

Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written,

‘The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little.’

But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming of the good news; and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill.

We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of others. And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters,

but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

This is the word of the Lord.

Mark 5.21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. 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 round 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.

Reflection – Ann Waizeneker

In this morning's gospel reading we see Mark putting together two healing miracles. And incidentally he is not alone, we find these miracles in three of the gospels and in all three they are paired together.

The narrative begins with Jairus, a Jewish elder, falling at Jesus' feet and begging him to come to his home to heal his dying daughter.

Jesus sets out with him but then we leave this story because of a diversion on the way – a sick woman manages to touch Jesus' cloak and Jesus stops to establish who has done this and why. And her healing through this incident is described.

The drama builds through this delay, during which time Jairus' daughter dies. But Jesus continues to her home, with his closest disciples, and brings the girl back to life.

So, you might say, we have two miracles delivered in a sandwich form. And this technique helps us, I think, to see the similarities in what, on the surface, are unconnected incidents.

Both these healings centre on women – one old, one young - but both beyond medical help,

They both feature the number twelve: the age of the young girl, Jairus's daughter and the length of time the older woman has borne her affliction and been excluded from society.

Then there is the double issue of impurity here:

First the taboo around the woman with the severe haemorrhages. Now women were shut away, seen as unclean and defiled when bleeding, so being out and touching Jesus' cloak in the crowd is going against all convention.

This healing shows Jesus throwing aside the irrational fears and inhibitions of his own culture, touching the supposedly untouchable. And in touching and raising Jairus' daughter he overturns a second taboo. Contact with a dead body was one of the chief sources of impurity in

Jewish law and yet Jesus takes this little girl by the hand and tells her to get up.

What we mustn't overlook here is the importance of the physical contact Jesus has with both these females – surely not necessary for the healing itself, but a clear sign of Jesus' dismissal of these damaging aspects of Jewish law. We shouldn't overlook how truly shocking those healings would have been at that time, in that context. Nor the courage it would have taken for the two who approach Jesus to seek his help.

Let's think about this for a moment:

Jairus is a leader of the synagogue, in a senior position where the prevailing view is that Jesus poses a real threat to Jewish law and order. So, Jairus approaching Jesus in this way is really significant. What did it cost him to do this? What will he do with this experience and how will it affect his role in the synagogue? I wonder what you or I would have done in his situation?

And then there's the older woman, sick and excluded for twelve years. It is difficult for us to imagine this exclusion and cruelty, but it shouldn't be – it still happens in some parts of the world. This woman puts herself in danger merely by mingling in the throng of people around Jesus. And then Jesus calls her centre stage. What courage she must have had to approach him in those circumstances.

Let's put these two instances of healing in the wider context of Jesus' teaching. Again and again, he welcomed the outcasts: the Samaritans, the tax collectors, lepers, those with various deformities and mental illness.

And again and again, we, today, forget or ignore this teaching.

According to World Health Organisation statistics, there are over 200,000 new cases of leprosy diagnosed globally every year. The Leprosy Mission believes these figures are understated because of the stigma that still surrounds the disease. This is particularly shocking because there has been an effective cure for leprosy since 1982.

Jesus' teaching and actions consistently tell us that we are all God's children, all in his care. And yet, somehow this often does not translate into action both within and without the church. When people with leprosy, and many other conditions, are still stigmatised and suffering, then we are not understanding or acting on the implications of Jesus' teaching.

With his warm and loving word and touch, Jesus casts aside the fears and inhibitions, the cruel and irrational taboos of his own culture. He shows us that all are included and equal in the community of God's children.

Thinking about this reminded me of Princess Diana visiting Aids patients all those years ago when there was a real fear about this new disease and lots of ignorance around how one might contract it. Diana deliberately touched patients and held their hands on a very well publicised visit, which did much to dispel some of the myths surrounding it.

Perhaps this reading today will prompt us to review our own prejudices and fears. To see where we shut people out, consciously or unconsciously, excluding them, whatever the reason, wherever it is on the scale of rationality.

In Jesus, here and so often elsewhere in the gospels, we see God's love and compassion, and God's challenge to what is wrong in his sight.

Let us respond in faith, confident of God's loving commitment to each one of us, and confident in Jesus's words to Jairus: "do not fear, only believe".

Prayers

We lift our prayers to you, O Lord, for all people everywhere, those close to us and those far away.

To the bidding: Lord in your mercy

Please respond: **hear our prayer**

Lord, we pray for the Church worldwide and for its leaders. We remember particularly those being persecuted for their faith around the world and ask that you protect them. We ask for your help to grow in faith and to respect the beliefs of others even if we do not share them, to celebrate what we have in common and accept our differences. Guide us in our ministries as we live each day determined to spread the Good News of your son Jesus Christ

Silence

Lord in your mercy - **hear our prayer**

Creator God we pray for the leaders of the world carrying responsibilities for the lives of their people and ask that they work for peace and justice rather than power and supremacy. In our own country we pray that the outcome of the general election this week brings unity and a common commitment to making our nation fairer and more equitable and we ask for your blessing on those elected. We pray for those places troubled by disaster especially areas of conflict in Ukraine and Israel-Palestine. We lift up to you all the victims of war, oppression and terrorism, and ask for a new determination to end the spiral of violence which brings with it so much fear, heartache and suffering. May we by our prayers and actions play our part in making this the world you want for us all

Silence

Lord in your mercy - **hear our prayer**

Father we pray for our own community, and thank you for our families and friends. We pray especially for young people that they may grow up knowing love and hope, valuing life and respecting others. We pray for those who are about to leave school and move on to the next stage in

their lives, and for those for whom what happens next depends on exam performance. Gracious God, we pray for the people in this area especially for those who feel excluded, exploited or ignored. Help us, your people, to work together to build a community which is as open and generous as your love

Silence

Lord in your mercy - **hear our prayer**

Father, we pray for healing in body, mind and spirit for all who are in need and for those around them. We pray that in lives darkened by any kind of pain, distress or grief the light of Christ will bring comfort, hope and a sense of your all-encompassing love. May we always offer gentle support to those in trouble, sensitive encouragement to those in need, and strength and support to those in weakness. From our own community we pray especially for: Leon and Valda Bailey, Joyce Pringle, Ann Hunt, Anuwat Wanggane, Joan Tyson, Alan Coe, Jack Tubby, Rob & Lucy, Roger Jones, Patricia Ash, Jason Thomson, Ryan Day, Brenda Hulland, David New, and Adrina and Alan Price. We ask for your healing presence with us all and in the silence of our hearts raise before you those whom we know and love who are ill or in need at this time

Silence

Lord in your mercy - **hear our prayer**

Father, we pray for all those who have died and thank you for their lives and what you have taught us through them. We remember those who have recently died: Bryan Plester, Jenny Tuff, Claire Wallace and Beryl Robinson. We remember with love and gratitude those whose anniversary of death falls at this time: Geoff Stevens, Jean Glover, Leonard Webb, Richard Wickham, Linda Hampton, Simon Bowen, William Layton, Betty Wake and Evelyn King. We pray for all those who mourn, whether their loss is recent or longer term, and ask that you sustain them in their grief. May we not fear death but welcome it as the final fulfilment of all you offer us, and we thank you for the promise of eternal life.

Faithful God we pray for ourselves; as we go from our worship today to start the week ahead, we ask that in all we do, we may we walk more closely with you at our side safe in the knowledge that your Fatherly love and care knows no bounds.

Merciful Father,

Accept these prayers for the sake of your son,

Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen