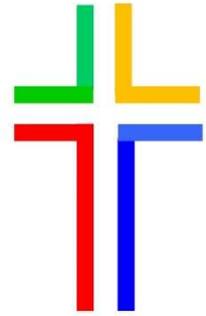


Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 16 August



“Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous deeds among all peoples.” (1 Chronicles 16:23-24). If you are aware of anyone who would like a copy of our weekly worship sheet or you would like an extra copy to give or send to someone, please just let us know.

PRAYER

Lord, You provide for us; You give us everything that we need. Even when we have not been aware of it, Your hand has been upon us, a hand of blessing. Let all the people praise You, Lord. Let all the people praise You. Because You never change, we know that You will bless us tomorrow as well as

today. Yesterday, today and for ever You are the same; our gracious, unchanging God. Let all the people praise You, Lord. Let all the people praise You. **Amen**

THE LORD’S PRAYER

READING FOR TODAY Matthew 15:21-28 (NIV)

The faith of a Canaanite woman

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.’

²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, ‘Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.’

²⁴ He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’

²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said.

²⁶ He replied, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.’

²⁷ ‘Yes it is, Lord,’ she said. ‘Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.’

²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed at that moment.

REFLECTION

Who was the woman in the story? She was a Canaanite. Jesus should not have been talking to this person at all, because: 1. She was a woman. Jewish men would avoid speaking in public with any woman who was not related to them. 2. She was not Jewish. Again, religious Jewish men would avoid getting close to those who were not Jews.

There is something else worth noting. Jesus healed the woman’s daughter, but the healing is told in just one sentence. The story is about the conversation rather than the healing.

The work of the Messiah was always seen as being for the Jewish people first. Those who were not Jewish would have to wait. If Jesus understood that he was the Messiah, then he might think that it would be going against what God wanted to use his power for this woman in this way.

Did Jesus change His mind in this story? Some people think that Jesus said what he did to see how much the woman believed in him. Others think that Jesus changed his mind. If Jesus changed, his mind, why did he do so? Jesus was a human being and human beings change their minds. This does not mean that they were wrong before; just that when they get new information, it changes the way that they think. God made people so that they would have minds and hearts open to him, ready to listen and to obey. Perhaps this was what happened here. Jesus, always listening to God, changed his plans to obey what God wanted. Perhaps he remembered that argument with the religious men, who were getting so worked up about rules that they forgot how important it was

to say things that were pleasing to God. Maybe Jesus saw this idea about who the Messiah should or should not help as being like one of those rules. This is important for us today. The Christian faith is not a static faith and God, through his Holy Spirit is leading us to new understandings and insights. This does not mean that God changes his mind on things, but that we as human beings begin to understand more of what it is he wants for his people. This is true of something like slavery, which the bible is quite neutral on, but today we all see as quite wrong. In biblical times Jesus, Peter and Paul were all led to change their minds on important issues from which we benefit greatly. Who is to say that this process has ended?

And what about Jesus's statement about the dogs? Some say that this may be a saying or a proverb that Jesus was quoting. It is also true that although we have the words, we do not have the look on his face or the twinkle in his eye. There will always be a great deal about God that we do not understand. What we can be certain of, demonstrated by what Jesus did in this story and taught on many other occasions, is that EVERYONE can share in God's love and goodness. Even today that is sometimes a principle that can be difficult to live out fully.

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

Jesus said, 'What comes out of the mouth comes from the heart.'

Let us pray today for all those Whose work involves public speaking. We pray for world leaders; for our Queen and Prime Minister, and for all those who make speeches that influence others. Help them to speak of peace and justice for all. May their words be matched by their deeds.

We pray for those who give us the news on the television or radio or through the newspapers. Help them to be honest in the way that they find their stories and truthful in the way that they report them.

We pray for entertainers and sports people, especially those who are listened to by children and young people. Help them to show a high standard of behaviour, setting a good example in what they say and do.

We pray for teachers and lecturers, especially any reading this today. We pray for those who teach in our local schools or colleges. Give them wisdom and understanding.

We pray for our own minister and Circuit workers, and for others who come to preach at our church. Guide them by Your Holy Spirit, so that they may say what is pleasing to You and guide Your people in Your name. We pray now for ourselves. Every day, we have opportunities to speak. Show us how to use these opportunities well, so that everything that we say may give You glory.

Lord, fill Your people's hearts with love for You; and guide us as we speak. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

HYMN H&P 758

In Christ there is no east or west,
In Him no south or north;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide world.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find,
His service is the golden cord
close-binding all mankind.

Join hands, then, brothers of the faith,
Whate'er your race may be;
Who serves my Father as a son
Is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
In Him meet south and north,
All Christlike souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

John Oxenham 1852 - 1941

BLESSING

The writer of the Psalms says, 'May all the nations praise You.' Lord, as we finish our worship, may we play our part in praising You wherever we go. And the Blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us always. Amen