



# The Methodist Church In Ireland

## Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August, 'Not just a Crumb'

This short act of worship has been prepared so that you can spend some moments with God, knowing that other people in your local congregation and beyond are sharing in this same act of worship with you.

### Opening Prayer

Holy Lord, you are worthy of all our praises. You reign in majesty above us and are our Lord forever. We thank you for allowing us to be graced by your presence today, hallowed be your name. Accept our love and adoration in Jesus' name. We are here to pray, almighty God that you will always light our way with your presence. May all people see your glory through us and come to worship you as the living God. Amen

### Hymn: He is exalted the King

*Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful song*

He is exalted the King is exalted on High,  
I will praise Him  
He is exalted forever exalted  
And I will praise His name

He is the Lord  
Forever His truth shall reign  
Heaven and Earth  
Rejoice in His holy name  
He is exalted the King is exalted on high!

*Twila Paris (b, 1958)*

### Genesis 45: 1-15

#### Joseph Makes Himself Known

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers.<sup>2</sup> And he

wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

<sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. <sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. <sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. <sup>10</sup> You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have.

<sup>11</sup> I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

<sup>12</sup> "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to

you. <sup>13</sup>Tell my father about all the honour accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”

<sup>14</sup>Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. <sup>15</sup>And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

### Let us pray

Dear Heavenly Father, we lower our heads before you and we confess that we have too often forgotten that we are yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to You. For these things we ask your forgiveness and we also ask for your strength. Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to You in our world. Remind us to be who You would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us to You and build our relationship with You and with those You have given us on earth.

### Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32

#### The Remnant of Israel

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup>God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.

<sup>29</sup>for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now<sup>[a]</sup> receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. <sup>32</sup>For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

### Matthew 15: 21-28

#### The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

<sup>21</sup>Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>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.”

<sup>23</sup>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.”

<sup>24</sup>He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

<sup>25</sup>The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

<sup>26</sup>He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

<sup>27</sup>“Yes, it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

### Reflection

In our gospel reading Jesus is less than eager to help this woman, explaining that his mission is first to the house of Israel. However, Jesus is the one who has left Jewish territory and invaded this woman’s world. Furthermore, this Canaanite woman -- an unclean, outsider -- demonstrates that she has a better grasp of Jesus’ identity than the hand-selected disciples do at this point in the narrative. Jesus’ encounter with the Canaanite woman unsettles boundaries and calls into question definitions of clean and unclean.

Jesus has entered Tyre and Sidon where the Canaanite woman instantly greets him. It is remarkable that enough word about Jesus had spread to this region that this woman would somehow know who Jesus is (Mark 3:8). The text does not say that he performed any signs in Tyre and Sidon before meeting her (11:20-24), yet she somehow recognises him, not just as a roaming healer but as a rightful king.

The woman greets Jesus as the “Son of David.” Her recognition is even more remarkable because the disciples have been a bit slow in recognising Jesus.

In Matthew 14, after the walking on the sea, they do recognize Jesus as the Son of God, but it is not until 16:16 that Peter declares Jesus as Messiah. Yet, this woman hails Jesus as the Son of David, begs his mercy, and entreats his power over a demon that has “severely” possessed her daughter (v. 22). How is it possible that this woman has more insight into Jesus’ identity than his disciples? She is, after all, an unclean outsider, part of a people who are remembered as an old enemy of Israel.

Jesus’ response is, perhaps, the most perplexing piece of this narrative. At first, he does not say a word to her, but he refuses to send her away. Only after her persistence does he converse with her. Twice, he explains to her that his mission is first to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Indeed, the narrative has emphasized that the “house of Israel” has provided Jesus with more work than one labourer could feasibly handle (9:35-10:6). The need in Israel is indeed great.

The disciples, too, seem to think that Jesus should stay focused on the needs of Israel. They kept telling him to send her away because they are tired of hearing her cries for help (15:23).

Perhaps, Jesus’ refusal to listen to the disciples gave the woman hope that her request would be heard. She does something that is significant in this Gospel: she kneels before him. The author of Matthew uses this action as one befitting a king. The magi, who are also Gentiles, are the first to offer worship to Jesus in this way (Matthew 2:2, 8, 11). The unrepentant slave bows before the king in the parable of unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:), and the mother of James and John kneel before Jesus as a king of a kingdom (Matthew 20:20). For the woman to treat Jesus in this manner is in keeping with her earlier declaration of Jesus as the Son of David.

Jesus’ response to her second cry for help includes a reiteration of his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He even likens her status as a Gentile to the status of the small, pet dogs who long to be fed from the table (15:26).

The woman, however, is not deterred. She claims a place in the household, but it is not a position of privilege or even the position of an insider.

She accepts the status of a family’s dog by claiming that even the dog enjoys crumbs from the table.

Her statement is striking. She places hope in what others have discarded. This Son of David has so much power that there is enough power for the house of Israel and more than enough left over for her. She is not trying to thwart his mission. She just wants a crumb, recognizing that even a crumb is powerful enough to defeat the demon that has possessed her daughter.

Jesus praises her faith. This woman seems to understand what the members of the household of Israel have yet to grasp. Jesus is not just hope for Israel but the hope for the whole world.

In the passage that immediately precedes this story, Jesus responds to challenges from the scribes and Pharisees by reframing the boundaries of clean and unclean. In 15:18, Jesus declares that what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and what comes out of the heart determines what makes one clean. What comes out of the Canaanite woman’s heart is faith -- certainty that Jesus has power enough for Israel and power enough to save her non-Israelite daughter.

Her words demonstrate that the boundary separating her from the house of Israel must be reconsidered. With a faith so pure, how can she be deemed unclean? The encounter with the Canaanite woman prepares the reader for Jesus’ great commission to go and to make disciples of all the nations (28:20).

Reading Jesus’ encounter with the Canaanite woman reminds the church that God is constantly entering new territory and breaking boundaries. This God is in the unsettling business of meeting outsiders and granting them not just a crumb, but a place at the table.

### **Respond/Reflect**

Take some time to reflect and respond. Is there new territory or new things that God is prompting you to look at and do, specifically with those deemed as ‘outsiders?’

## **A time of Prayer**

Let's pray

Lord, you know our hearts and minds and you know our concerns and worries.

Lord, help us to see the world more through your eyes and with the same love that you have for it.

Today Lord we bring before you those who feel on the outside.

We want to pray for those who feel on the outside of their family. Who feel uncared for, unloved by those who should love them unconditionally or who feel misunderstood. May they feel your love, your warmth, your care and your understanding.

We pray for those who feel on the outside of friendship groups. Those who struggle to connect and make friends. For those who spend most of their time by themselves. May they feel your love, your warmth, your care, and your understanding.

We pray for those who feel on the outside of the community or of society. For those who are treated differently or badly because they are seen as 'different' and this impacts how people look at them and behave towards them. May they feel your love, your warmth, your care, and your understanding.

Lord, help us to welcome, care, love and understand everyone. May we be a people who love as deeply as you do and care as deeply as you do, as well as call out wrongs and prejudices.

We ask this all in your name. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father.....

## **Hymn: Let love be real**

*Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful hymn*

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,  
without the need to manage and to own;  
a haven free from posing and pretending,  
where every weakness may be safely known.  
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,  
give me your love wherever we may go.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other, with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,  
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;  
that helps us face the risk of truly living,  
and makes us brave to be what we might be.  
Give me your strength when all my words are  
weakness, give me your love despite all you know.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other....*

Let love be real, with no manipulation,  
no secret wish to harness or control;  
let us accept each other's incompleteness,  
and share the joy of learning to be whole.  
Give me your hope through dreams and  
disappointments:  
give me your trust when all my failings show:

*As God loves us, so let us love each other....*

Michael Forster (b.1946)

## **A prayer of Blessing**

Loving Father, help us to be more loving to those who are seen as outsiders. Help us to see our own prejudices and change but also to speak out about other people's prejudices in a way that is loving and kind. **Amen.**

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