

# **Christ Church, Ipswich**

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

## **All-age Sunday Worship with Holy Communion**

Hello, I hope you are well. Today, in our all-age service of worship there is an opportunity for us all to share Holy Communion together. If you are worshipping at home and would like to participate, may I encourage you to prepare some bread and wine (or something similar) ready for this part of our worship. Our focus this morning will be on our Gospel Reading, Mark 7:24-37.

Let us worship God together:

### **Call to worship**

Let us say to one another:

'Be strong. Do not fear. God, our God, is here with us.'

Come with your fears, your doubts, your anxiety.

Come just as you are.

You are welcome in the name of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **A prayer of approach**

Lord God, we come to you in so many different ways.

We may jump for joy at being in your presence;

or we may shamble in,

weighed down by the cares of our world.

The Gentile woman,

overcome with worry about her daughter,

fell at your feet and pleaded with you.

The deaf man had the people of Decapolis to plead for his healing.

God of miracles, however we are feeling,

we come to meet you, expectant and hopeful.

Whether we are one or many,

and whatever our situation in life,

you welcome us, arms wide open –

and we worship you, Lord God of all.

Welcoming God, we thank you that you invite us  
to worship you and to be together.

Sustain us with your presence,

nourish us with your word and sacrament,

strengthen us in your service

and then send us out to live

every day of our lives, in your name. **Amen.**

### **R&S 285 O for a thousand tongues to sing**

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
my great Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King,  
the triumphs of his grace.

Jesus, the name that charms our fears,  
that bids our sorrows cease;  
'tis music in the sinner's ears,  
'tis life and health and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
 he sets the prisoner free;  
 his blood can make the foulest clean,  
 his blood availed for me.

He speaks, and listening to his voice  
 new life the dead receive;  
 the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,  
 the humble poor believe.

Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,  
 your loosened tongues employ;  
 ye blind, behold your Saviour come;  
 and leap, ye lame, for joy!

My gracious Master and my God,  
 assist me to proclaim,  
 to spread through all the earth abroad  
 the honours of thy name.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

### **A prayer of adoration**

All-inclusive and ever-loving God,  
 we praise and adore you.  
 With you there is no south or north,  
 no east or west – no borders.  
 You care for each one of us.  
 You are a healing God, who heals us  
 wherever and whenever we need your touch –  
 whether in body, mind or spirit.  
 We look upon you now,  
 our hearts ablaze with love for you. **Amen.**

### **A prayer of confession**

Forgive us, Lord, for all the times  
 we are too quick to form opinions,  
 too quick to judge others;  
 the times we don't give people the benefit of the doubt;  
 or fail to consider what they might be going through.  
 Open our eyes to see and our ears to listen, as you do. **Amen.**

### **Assurance of forgiveness**

The Gentile woman and the deaf man  
 opened their minds and hearts to Jesus.  
 When we open our minds,  
 God helps us to understand his ways.  
**We bless you, Lord.**

When we open our hearts, God sees deep within.  
 He loves us and wants us to turn to him,  
 even when we've done wrong.  
**We bless you, Lord.**

God comes to us now and listens to us,  
 loves us, and forgives us.  
 He makes us whole.  
**We bless you, Lord. Amen.**

### **A prayer of praise and thanksgiving**

Lord God of healing,  
 we thank you for the different ways you answer our prayers.  
 The Gentile woman wasn't frightened to answer you back –  
 and you knew she was right.

We thank you for the power of words.  
 The deaf man had the confidence in you,  
 to jump up and receive your healing.  
 We thank you for the power of actions  
 that speak louder than words.  
 Thank you that you are available  
 to each one of us who trusts in you. **Amen.**

### **A short talk with our children and young people**

*I will share a few words and a prayer about today's theme with our children and young people in the church sanctuary.*

#### **Old Testament Reading**

#### **Isaiah 35:4-7a**

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
 'Be strong, do not fear!  
 Here is your God.  
 He will come with vengeance,  
 with terrible recompense.  
 He will come and save you.'  
<sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
 and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
<sup>6</sup>then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
 and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
 For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
 and streams in the desert;  
<sup>7</sup>the burning sand shall become a pool,  
 and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
 the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
 the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

#### **Gospel Reading**

#### **Mark 7:24-37**

##### *The Syrophenician Woman's Faith*

<sup>24</sup> From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, <sup>25</sup> but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. <sup>26</sup> Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. <sup>27</sup> He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' <sup>28</sup> But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' <sup>29</sup> Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' <sup>30</sup> So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

##### *Jesus Cures a Deaf Man*

<sup>31</sup> Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. <sup>33</sup> He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. <sup>34</sup> Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' <sup>35</sup> And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. <sup>36</sup> Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. <sup>37</sup> They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

## Reflection

In our gospel reading today, we find that Jesus has travelled into the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon after a period of ministry spent healing and teaching many in Jewish territory. Now he encounters Gentiles in need of healing. The people are full of hope and faith in Jesus' ability to heal and they bring the needs of a sick girl and a deaf man to Jesus. As we just heard, Jesus heals them and then continues on his journey, urging the crowds to keep quiet about what he has done. Really, this reading explores how 'outsiders' are included in our journey of faith. The Gentile woman and the disabled man are both people who were considered to be outsiders in Jesus' society. But there are no borders to God's love and welcome.

It's probably fair to say that the story of the woman's faith in Mark 7:24-30 is the key story in this section which began with the sending of the twelve in Mark 6. This story takes the ongoing debate between the Pharisees and Jesus (see Mark 7:1-23), beyond the actual boundary between Jews and Gentiles. It is also about 'bread', which is an ongoing metaphor about the twelve's grasp of who Jesus is and what he's doing (See 6:52; 7:1-5 - the Greek literally says 'eat bread'; 7:27-28; 8:1-21).

So now Jesus is in Gentile territory. We notice that he is still hoping to have a little rest and recuperation time with his disciples; this has been an aim since Mark 6:30! He is visited by a Greek woman from 'up north' who has clearly heard of Jesus and knows where to find him, and she comes begging for her daughter's healing. Jesus tells a brief parable about boundaries; the mealtime boundary between the family and their animals (7:27). She completes the parable: the animals get the leftovers which interestingly, is exactly what happened for the disciples after the feeding of the five thousand in Mark 6:43! Jesus is astonished! It's not her faith that Jesus commends but her word. She's worked out something that the disciples don't appear to have grasped yet: that, as one commentator writes, 'the boundary between God's reign and everywhere else is porous and all sorts of people can come in and out, including this Greek woman.' Obviously, she did also have faith. It was faith that sent her on the journey to seek Jesus out, and faith that kept her going on the journey back to see whether Jesus' word was true and her daughter had been healed. And as we heard, wonderfully, that faith was not disappointed (7:30). Having broken down the boundaries in private, Jesus now very publicly opens the floodgates and shares the blessings of God's kingdom with the Gentiles. Perhaps this healing is pretty ordinary, but its significance is extraordinary because the writer of Mark evokes Isaiah 35, a prophecy of the coming of God and his kingdom to the whole world and not just to Israel, even though Israel is the focus.

It is the openness of God's kingdom that is clearly the theme of today's gospel reading. If we think for just a moment about the story of the healed deaf man, we might wonder whether it is significant that Mark chooses to tell us the Aramaic, 'eph' pha-tha', that Jesus speaks. Did he do this so that it stands out? Might 'eph' pha-tha', 'be opened' be referring not just to this man's ears and mouth but also to the kingdom, now opened to Gentiles? All foods being declared clean by Jesus in the preceding passage now wonderfully expands into all people being declared clean. Jesus again tries to keep what he's doing quiet but, as is so often case, the good news spreads like wildfire throughout the whole region. The Jewish leaders might not grasp this, but now two Gentiles have joined him in his message: the boundaries are breaking down and all are welcome to come and experience God's reign.

So Mark's story tells us about two people who weren't welcome in Israel because they weren't Jewish and yet Jesus welcomed them. We might try and put ourselves in their shoes; the quick-witted woman able to finish Jesus' parable, or the deaf man excluded because he could neither hear nor speak properly. What did it mean to them to be welcomed into the kingdom Jesus proclaims? How do you think the disciples reacted to this? What lessons are there for us and for our church community? How does Mark's story help us in wrestling with issues of welcome and inclusion? How should we welcome and include those who are different or who feel they will not fit in our churches? Let us do all we can play our part in the boundary breaking kingdom of God, to see that all are offered a warm welcome here and that there is never any exclusion due to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, disability or for any other reason. Let us hear the cries of those who are too often and unjustly discriminated against and in God's name, let us be those who offer only a loving and liberating welcome to all. We stand ready to embody the borderless kingdom of God! Amen.

*A moment for reflection*

**R&S 447      I come with joy to meet my Lord,**

I come with joy to meet my Lord,  
 forgiven, loved, and free,  
 in awe and wonder to recall  
 his life laid down for me.

I come with Christians far and near  
 to find, as all are fed,  
 the new community of love  
 in Christ's communion bread.

As Christ breaks bread and bids us share  
 each proud division ends.  
 The love that made us, makes us one,  
 and strangers now are friends.

And thus with joy we meet our Lord,  
 his presence, always near,  
 is in such friendship better known:  
 we see, and praise him here.

Together met, together bound,  
 we'll go our different ways,  
 and as his people in the world  
 we'll live and speak his praise.

Brian Wren (1936- )

**Holy Communion*****Words of Invitation***

Look, here is the Lord's Table spread as for a feast.  
 Bread for breaking, wine poured for drinking:  
 signs of his love and hospitality,  
 symbols of his life broken, his blood poured out.

He is not dead!  
 He is risen and present among us,  
 evidence of God's covenant grace and promise.

So we come in faith to the table, you and I,  
 companions on the journey.  
 Some of us fresh and eager,  
 others weary, in need of nourishment.  
 All of us conscious of our failings.

***Almighty God,  
 to whom all hearts are open,  
 all desires known,  
 and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
 cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
 by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
 that we may perfectly love you,  
 and worthily magnify your holy name;  
 through Christ our Lord. Amen.***

Come now, don't hesitate,  
the feast is ready  
and the Lord himself invites you.

### ***We Remember***

It was the night of the Passover, and Jesus and his friends were sharing supper together. While they were eating, he told them that one of them would betray him. They were appalled and protested saying 'Not I Lord, I would never betray you.' Jesus took some bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying 'Take this and eat. This is my body.'  
He took the cup of wine and after giving thanks passed it among them saying as they drank 'this is my blood of the covenant. It is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. I will not drink again until the day comes when I drink with you in my father's Kingdom.'

### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

Creating and redeeming God,  
we give you thanks and praise  
for your covenant of grace:  
a covenant expressed in sinful people  
who know forgiveness,  
the weary who are refreshed,  
the hungry who are nourished,  
the captives who are set free  
and the oppressed who experience liberation.  
Thank you that you chose to make us a part of your story.

Thank you for Jesus Christ who revealed your love in his death and resurrection  
and who continues to share his life with us through bread and wine.  
Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit  
who sustains us in our walk together,  
helping us to watch over each other,  
to pray for one another,  
and to work together for justice and truth.

As we eat this bread  
and drink from the cup,  
(signs of hospitality and grace),  
may we be empowered to serve boldly  
wherever you may call.

Accept these prayers  
and our heartfelt thanksgiving  
in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ***We Share***

#### ***The bread***

One people, one loaf, a sign of our common faith  
and testimony to the generosity of our lord Jesus Christ.

Take this bread, food for faith,  
and feed on it with thanksgiving.

***The wine***

One people, one cup, a sign of the new covenant  
poured out for you and for many.

It is a covenant sealed by his blood.  
When we drink we must be thankful  
and agree together never to forget.

***We Journey***

**Holy God,  
we have been nourished and had our thirst quenched,  
through bread broken and wine poured  
in thanksgiving for your son Jesus Christ.  
Send us out to be as generous to those we meet this week,  
that we might show through word and deed  
that he is not dead, but risen and present among us.  
Hallelujah! Amen.**

**Ours prayers of intercession**

God whose peace knows no borders,  
as we watch the aftermath of the withdrawal of American troops in Afghanistan and see the chaos at Kabul airport and bewilderment on the faces of people left behind, we pray urgently for your peace to descend. We pray for those who are fearful, for people whose circumstances have suddenly and radically changed, help them work out what to do and find the ways and means to do what is necessary to stay safe. We pray for those now in charge of the country. May our anxieties about the way they will rule move us to pray with passion for Afghanistan.

Lord bring peace,  
**and may your love be known by all.**

God whose comfort knows no borders,  
hurricane Ida has left a trail of destruction in the United States and with a rising death toll we pray for the communities that have been deeply affected by the storm. Give the emergency services resilience and patience as they work to rescue people and restore their vital services. For those families who have suffered loss, please bring them support and kindness as they come to terms with what has happened. As communities rebuild, we pray they would have the resources to regroup, restore and recover from this natural disaster and be able to move forwards.

Lord bring comfort,  
**and may your love be known by all.**

God whose compassion knows no borders,  
with the new school term just getting going for some and looming for others we pray for everyone moving on this September. Whether changing year groups, schools or heading off to university for the first time help our young people as things change this autumn. We are particularly mindful of those for whom last year was very difficult – with covid, disruption to routines, difficult times with home learning and personal loss. May all of the children who have had a hard time know compassion and care and may this year be calm and ordered, filled with fun and purpose.

Lord bring compassion,  
**and may your love be known by all.**

God whose care and concern knows no borders,  
 Covid still dominates all of our news cycles. It feels like there are very big differences across our world with some places heading out of restrictions and people feeling life is getting back to normal, and others still struggling with the disease and a lack of vaccinations. Please give world leaders the motivation and determination to help everyone manage covid. Help those who make complex decisions about vaccinations work out how to provide jabs for the poor as well as the rich. We pray for wisdom and calm as we approach the winter, for timely and sensible decisions and for health and safety for our friends, family and neighbours.

Lord bring care and concern,  
**and may your love be known by all.**

God of joy,  
 we thank you for the joy the Paralympics has brought to us in the last couple of weeks. Watching fellow human beings overcoming adversity and triumphing in their sports is exhilarating and heartening. Thank you for all of the athletes who have competed. As they head home may they feel they have worked to the best of their ability and know how inspirational they are.

Lord bring more joy to this world,  
**and may your love be known by all.**

God of love,  
 We pray also for those on our hearts today.  
 We hold Pat Smith in our thoughts and prayers at this very sad time.  
 We pray for Janet Wilson as she recovers from her fall.  
 We keep Joan and Frank in our prayers.  
 We pray for Wylie as he recovers following treatment on Wednesday.  
 We keep Margaret Widdowson in our prayers.  
 We pray for all our dear church friends in residential care.  
 Loving God, we also offer you our thanks and praise for Kiki's good news this week:  
 we are so delighted to hear that she now has leave to remain in the UK  
 and we pray your rich blessings upon her and her family.

*We bring other friends and loved ones before you in a moment of quiet.*

Lord bring comfort, hope and healing to those in need,  
**and may your love be known by all. Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

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.  
 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.**



## R&S 574 Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!

Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!  
God's saving news to all the nations take:  
proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,  
that all the world His glorious praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;  
he will in grace respond to all who call:  
how shall they call if they have never heard  
the gracious invitation of His word?

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:  
share God's good gifts – let no one be denied;  
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,  
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!  
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;  
go till all nations His great name adore  
and serve him, Lord and King forever more.

James E. Seddon. (1915-83)

### A sending out prayer

God of salvation,  
you open the way to life  
by offering us unconditional love.  
We rejoice in our freedom,  
our healing and our hope.  
Teach us to be open to others,  
to offer welcome, and practise inclusion.  
In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

### The Blessing

Go and as you go, know this:  
In grace you were created,  
in mercy you have been sustained  
and in love you will be held forever.

And the blessing of almighty God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be upon you and all those you love,  
this day and always. **Amen.**

### The Grace

Holding one another in our prayers, we say together:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all,  
for evermore.  
Amen.**

With love and best wishes,  
*Neil*

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