

[OPENING PRAYERS AND HOLY COMMUNION ARE AVAILABLE AS A VIDEO HERE](#)

PART 1 – OPENING PRAYERS

WELCOME

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His steadfast love endures for ever!
Grace and peace be with you
and also with you.

SENTENCE

Thus says the Lord, 'Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.' Isaiah 56.1

LIGHTING THREE CANDLES

We light a light in the name of the Maker,
 who lit the world and breathed the breath of life for us
We light a light in the name of the Son,
 who saved the world and stretched out his hand to us
We light a light in the name of the Spirit,
 who encompasses the world and blesses our souls with yearning
We light three lights for the trinity of love:
God above us, God beside us, God beneath us:
the beginning, the end, the everlasting one.

CANTICLE: A SONG OF THE WORD OF THE LORD
from Isaiah 55.6–11.

Seek the Lord while he may be found:
call upon him while he is near;
Let the wicked abandon their ways:
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
Return to the Lord,
who will have mercy:
to our God, who will richly pardon.
'For my thoughts are not your thoughts:
neither are your ways my ways', says the Lord.
'For as the heavens are higher than the earth:
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
'As the rain and the snow come down from above:
and return not again but water the earth,
'Bringing forth life and giving growth:
seed for sowing and bread to eat,
'So is my word that goes forth from my mouth:
it will not return to me fruitless,
'But it will accomplish that which I purpose:
and succeed in the task I gave it.'

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

My brothers and sisters, not out of dread and fear, but believing that God is faithful to forgive, let us rid ourselves of what we need to carry no longer.

Merciful God, we have sinned in what we have thought and said, in the wrong we have done and in the good we have not done.

We have sinned in ignorance: we have sinned in weakness: we have sinned through our own deliberate fault.

We are truly sorry. We repent and turn to you.

Forgive us, for our Saviour Christ's sake, and renew our lives to the glory of your name. Amen

May God forgive you, Christ befriend you,
and the Spirit renew you and change your life. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of freedom,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that all people may know the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PLEASE PAUSE THE VIDEO

PART 2 — AN ALL AGE VIDEO PART 4 OF *WHERE IS GOD?* FOCUSING ON FINDING GOD IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES AND DOWNLOADABLE MATERIAL FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN [HERE](#)

PART 3 — LOOK UP AND READ THROUGH THE READINGS, LISTEN TO THE [SERMON PODCAST](#) (READ ALONG IF YOU WISH) BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE, AND PRAY THE INTERCESSIONS, TODAY BY REBEKAH PRYOR

READINGS

Romans 11:1-6

Psalm 67

Matthew 15:21-28

SERMON BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE

Available to listen online and/or download – access via Pentecost 2020 link and notice also a reasonable library of past sermons for you to listen to as you exercise or meditate...

Matthew 15:21-28

Let us pray:

Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Word; open our hearts and our minds to your Spirit as we reflect and pray. Amen.

*I would like to start by reading an edited version of **Back of the Bus**, by Aaron Reynolds. The story is written as a children's picture book about Rosa Parks.*

A young boy and his Mama were on a yellow and white bus with green trim around the windows. Looking out the bus window, the boy thought to himself that they were "sittin' right where we're supposed to--way in back." It was 1955, a warm December day in Montgomery, Alabama and the window was down.

The boy began to play with his big brown tiger eye marble and as the bus lurched and slowed the marble raced down the aisle to the front where Mrs. Parks was sitting. She worked at the tailor shop and she just smiled and sent the marble back to him. His Mama scolded him with those "worked-all-day eyes" and he put the marble inside his shirt pocket for just a bit.

People began to pile on and crowd the bus, they were "all crammed in like lima beans," and the boy could hear Mr. Blake, the bus driver, say to the African-American riders, "Y'all gotta move, now." He had a "growly ol' voice," enough to make anyone move, except someone wasn't planning on it.

The yellow and white bus with the green trim around the windows stood still and the boy asked his Mama why they weren't moving. "Hush, child," she said. He took out his marble again, but got another scolding from his Mama's "crinkled-up somethin's-wrong voice." There was something else wrong on the bus because there were people with angry scowling faces, some of them looking back at them, givin' them angry eyes. "We do somethin' wrong, Mama?" the boy whispered, "No, we ain't," she said. But he weren't too sure feeling his legs get all shaky.

And then, way up front, he saw Mrs. Parks still sitting in a front seat with her strong chin on and her eyes all fierce like a lightnin' storm. People were looking at her too all angry and she was sitting there, acting like nothing, like she belonged in that seat.

Mr. Blake announced he was going to call the police.

What was going to happen to Mrs. Parks? Were they going to be in trouble too? The boy knew she didn't belong up front like that, but then he started to wonder, maybe she did too.

The policeman arrived outside and the boy saw Mama's chin grow strong, like Mrs Parks. He watched the policeman take Mrs. Parks away in handcuffs, yet she be dignified and calm. Mama watched with her long tired eyes saying, "There you go, Rosa Parks, stirrin' up a nest of hornets. Tomorrow all this'll be forgot, or if it ain't, what's goin to happen to us all?"

The boy knew somehow it wouldn't be forgotten,

he would never forget he thought as he sat up a bit straighter and felt a little strength come into him, like Mama's and Mrs Park's chins. Mama's eyes too were changing from long-tired to lightnin'-storm eyes, just like Mrs Parks.

The bus moved off again, and not long after came to the boy and his mama's stop. They stood tall with their heads held a little higher as they walked down past those seats the driver had said were not for them.

As he walked, the boy took out his marble and start to hide it in his squeezey-tight fist. But then, instead, he held it up to the light, right out in the open. It shone all brown and golden in the sunlight, like it was smilin', 'Cuz it ain't gotta hide no more' he whispered.

Audacious people – who challenge the status quo, who make demands to be included, who demand their human rights. Whose presence creates discomfort for others, because if they are

right, we all have to change, by giving up some of our privileges, or comforts, or even what we thought we had ownership of, what *was ours by rights*.

Rosa Parks' moment of audaciousness sparked a whole chain of events that brought about a massive change for the African-American people.

And one wonders, in the gospel, if this Canaanite woman did the same for the world of the Gentiles.

This gospel reading is quite disturbing on many levels. Actually, the whole gospel of Matthew is *often* quite disturbing, his is the gospel we find language in, that is extreme, that can be rude and shocking to his readers. Even the words Matthew puts into the mouth of Jesus, some of them damning.

In today's story, Jesus has gone away, withdrawn, to a Gentile region. In the face of what he says in the next number of verses, about his mission being only for the lost sheep of Israel, one wonders why Jesus is there? Was it a break? Mark's version tells us Jesus entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there.

He is approached by a Canaanite woman. It is quite provocative of Matthew calling this woman a 'Canaanite'. Canaan was the name of the land into which the wandering people of Israel went, led by Moses' successor Joshua. The Canaanites were the people dispossessed in that conquest. By 1000BC, all that was left was the territory of Phoenicia with its cities Tyre and Sidon. Hence, in Mark's gospel, she is called a Syro-Phoenician. Canaanite was a word that had been out of use for 1000 years apart from history lessons.

Perhaps Matthew's use of that word had connotations like Aborigine has for Australians, Red Indians for Americans, Britons at one time for the Angles and Saxons, Israelites for Palestinians, and Palestinians for Israelites and so on. Land rights push buttons for many. To whom does this place really belong? Who is it who has rights (not just over land) here?

In Jesus' face is a Canaanite woman, one of the people who were pushed off the land to make it the land of promise for the wanderers, for the 'chosen people' of God. Jesus hears this Canaanite woman asking, no demanding, for the right of healing for her daughter.

And the barriers go up. He ignores her. Then he tells her she is excluded. Then he degrades her. Is this Jesus? We cannot believe what is coming out of his mouth, all the worse because just prior to this passage, Jesus piously teaches his disciples that *what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles*.

Really, the one person to admire in this whole scenario is the woman, that audacious woman who won't give up, who begs, pleads, and humbly calls upon Jesus with Jewish homage: *Lord, Son of David!* And she is in turn ignored, rejected and insulted. But she turns Jesus' insult into a charge against him, *you may call me a dog, but even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table*. And maybe, just maybe she causes Jesus to remember something else from the Jewish history.

Canaan, that place of aliens, and where, after possessing the land, after the conquest of the Canaanites the Lord God charged them to care for the alien among them. Canaan, where the Lord God charged his people to leave the gleanings of the field for the poor and the alien.

Yes, there are those passages back in the Old Testament that command extermination of the enemy. Those we have to make some judgment about. But there has always been this thread of kindness, of care, and of inclusion. The Bible has much in it that is descriptive – as in scenarios that are simply described for us as we might look at a picture, or even in a mirror. And we should be ever so careful of what passages we would deem prescriptive, of what we would go and do likewise.

I find this a very powerful passage that speaks of God's desire to overcome prejudice. A passage that could be applied to many a scenario in our world and in our church. And I find it particularly

powerful, *precisely*, because it is Jesus personally changing his attitude, setting a compelling example of overcoming biased and dualistic thinking.

We don't like to think of Jesus as being mean or racist or having any kind of prejudice – so how much better that we see this example of working through it and effecting deep change! I do not think we should see Jesus in any way diminished in seeing him this way. We often say of someone who has been able to acknowledge their error and change their mind in the face of reason, that he is a greater man, or she is a greater woman because of it. The idea, or mistaken idea of 'perfection', even of Jesus, is a static notion flying the face of the dynamic God. (An interesting topic that could be discussed at another time).

At the end of this scene, Jesus gives the kudos to the woman in commending her for her faith, a faith that was great, and I would add tough, because others tried to invalidate it. ***Woman, great is your faith.***

This is the only time in Matthew's gospel where anyone's faith is termed "great." The disciples (read: the church) are regularly informed that they are people of "little faith." Well, who is it that needs to have great faith when they find themselves discriminated against because of race, culture, creed, socio-economics, class, age, gender, sexual orientation and all other evil divisions that so often are righteously justified? Oppression is alive and well today in many minor and major forms. This passage asks us if we are willing to become aware of it around us?

As a final note, the woman is not only representative of the oppressed, but also contains divine revelation.

I will first read this quote from John Loneragan who was the Governor of Mountjoy Prison in Dublin, reflecting upon the relationships he saw between his prisoners and their mothers. "In all my years in the prison service I have not met five prisoners who have not had a good relationship with their mothers. The mothers never fail to visit and they never fail to take responsibility. We see them every day, mothers with maybe more than one drug addict in the family queueing to visit the son in jail, living out their lives with no resources, no support, nothing. It is unbelievable, considering the amount of pressure that mothers come under and the amount of torture they have to go through because their children get into trouble and into crime."

Is this not an image of God? Of the God who goes to where his children are, no matter where they may have ended up? Might we not see God in the Canaanite woman, who comes out in defence of the children who are deemed to be on the outside, who are 'not our problem'? Is the Canaanite woman an image of God who will not let her suffering child remain invisible? And in the end, is this not an image of the Jesus we know? Who became one who stands by the outcast, who welcomes the poor and the lowly, and who shares a table with all the sinners? Who will not be told no. Who was audacious enough to challenge the unjust status quo.

Ah, what a story this is. What an impact it has on all levels. What possibilities it offers for transformation. And of course hope, for an individual, a tribe, a type – any who might wonder if they truly are judged to be on the outside, God is that mother, your mother, who will never give up on, or for, you.

Let us pray

Sustain O God, all those who look to You in hope.

And strengthen us—your people—so that we may be a light to all those who find themselves in darkness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS BY REBEKAH PRYOR

With great faith

Christ, you make and remake the world—

Word and start of life,

Heart of joy and hope:

Be with us,

Become with us,

Christ, our God of life.

Today, we celebrate all that is good: winter sun and rain; friends and neighbours; people who care for us; jobs and food on tables; places to sleep; birds making nests and laying eggs in time for spring; shell middens on beaches, and deserts flush with wildflowers; fruit trees, buds quietly bursting; communities of faith finding and reforming themselves in unexpected ways—Christ, word and start of life: make and remake the world.

With great faith, we pray,

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lover of all,

Body of consolation:

Be with us,

Become with us,

Christ, our God of love.

Today, when fear and suffering touch every heart, and conflict quashes even the remotest possibilities of peace, somehow, let love and justice flow. In hospital wards where staff risk their own wellbeing for the sake of others; in quiet neighbourhood households where depression and anxiety go unnoticed; along the devastated streets of Beirut where civil unrest calls for deep and lasting change; in near and far communities, reeling in the after-effects of flooding and other disasters; in every place where people and creatures suffer without enough food or shelter or clean water—

Christ, lover of all: know the cries of broken hearts.

With great faith, we pray,

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Christ, entangled with us at each beginning—

Full of grace

Beyond understanding:

Be with us,

Become with us,

Christ, our God of peace.

Today, confident in the hope that your deep incarnation reaches down and touches every living thing, we remember those known to us in sickness, grief, need or trouble, naming them quietly now—

Christ, full of grace: be with us at each beginning.

With great faith, we pray:

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

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.

Save us from the time of trial,

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

PLEASE RESUME THE VIDEO FOR HOLY COMMUNION

GREETING OF PEACE

We are the body of Christ.
His Spirit is with us.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.
Accept and use our offerings for your glory
and for the service of your kingdom.
Blessed be God for ever.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you,
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts;
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We offer you praise, dear God, and hearts lifted high,
for in the communion of your love
Christ comes close to us
and we come close to Christ.
Therefore with the whole realm of nature around us,
with earth, sea and sky, we sing to you.
with all the saints before and beside us, we sing to you.
we join in the song of your unending greatness.

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is our brother Jesus,
who walks with us the road of our world's suffering,
and who is known to us in the breaking of bread.
On the night of his arrest Jesus took bread and having blessed it he broke the bread and gave it to
his disciples, saying, This is my body, given to you.
In the same way he took wine and having given thanks for it he poured it out and gave the cup to
his disciples, saying, This cup is the new relationship with God,
sealed with my blood. Take this and share it. I shall drink wine with you next in the coming
Kingdom of God.

Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.

Hear us, O Christ, and breathe your Spirit upon us and upon this bread and wine.
May they become for us your body, vibrant with your life, healing, renewing and making us whole.
And as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed
again into you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world.

**Blessing and honour and glory and power,
are yours forever and ever. Amen**

THE BREAKING AND SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

**We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
We who are many are one body,
for we all share in the one bread.**

AFTER COMMUNION

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

**Living God,
in this holy meal you fill us with new hope.
May the power of your love,
which we have known in word and sacrament,
continue your saving work among us,
give us courage for our pilgrimage,
and bring us to the joys you promise.**

**Father,
You sent your Son to bring us truth
and your Spirit to make us holy;
open our hearts to exalt you,
open our lives to reveal you,
our one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

BLESSING

**On our hearts and on our houses,
The blessing of God.
In our coming and our going,
The peace of God.
In our life and our believing,
The love of God.
At our end and new beginning,
Be arms of God to welcome us and bring us home. Amen.**

DISMISSAL

**Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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