



Inclusivity

Isaiah 56: 6-8

And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—
⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.
⁸ Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered.

PRAYER

God of the foreigner and outcast,
your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you.
Teach us as disciples of Christ so to love the world
that your name may be known throughout the earth. AMEN.

Matthew 15: 21-28

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly

Inclusivity Reflection from Revd. Penny Joyce

The passage from Matthew which is our gospel reading today, is a strange one at first glance. Jesus the kind and caring healer seems to refuse a Gentile woman's child the chance of healing. Why we ask ourselves? Jesus's primary role is to call the Jews to repentance and faith and it to them that he has come, taught, lived and healed. But this passage shows us that not only has he come as the Messiah, the long awaited Saviour of the Jews, but he is also the saviour of Gentiles as well. Remember how the disciples are told to '...go and make disciples of all nations...' Here we see a first indication that Jesus is modelling the 'all nations' message and this will have implication for the disciples, and for us. The Canaanite woman comes to Jesus to ask him to '...Have mercy on me Lord Son of David, my daughter is tormented by a demon...' At first Jesus does not respond and the disciples suggest that he send her away. What a strange response as Jesus says '*...I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel...*' There are views by theologians that this statement should be read more as a question '*...Was I sent only to the lost sheep of Israel?'*' It then becomes more of a reflection by Jesus. This response would certainly be more in keeping with his calling to 'make disciples of all nations.' The Canaanite woman pleads '*...Lord help me...*' Jesus responds saying '*...It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs...*' What a quick reply from the woman '*Yes Lord yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall under their master's table...*' It is good to note that the derogatory term that Jews gave to Gentiles were 'dogs' so we have another contextual link. The key issue from this passage is that Jesus commends the woman saying '*...Woman, great is your faith, let it be done as you wish...*' We have a clear indication that Canaanites could receive Jesus' blessing, healing and indeed show faith. As the gospel of Jesus spreads across the world preached by the likes of Peter and Paul, we find that it is

often Gentiles that are quick to recognise the gospel and good news of Jesus, more quickly even than the Jews themselves! They have become so bound up in legality and symbolism that faith in a living God has got lost along the way.

So some thought starters about Inclusivity....

- As we see people making dangerous journeys to get to the United Kingdom, will they be included and made welcome?
- Will those with mental health issues be understood, included and encouraged in a diverse community?
- As the homeless who were housed during lock down and now return to the streets, will the government seek to find new way of housing and helping them?
- Where do you think inclusivity is still not practised and why?
- Might we be surprised if we could see those who we will find in Heaven....there might be some shocks!

Hymn Reflection from Malcolm Sturgess

The hymns we have included in this series so far have come from eleven different centuries and several different hymn books, though predominantly from the New A&M, the core of which is our red book. Until now, only one (*Inspired by love and anger*) has been in NHWS, our "brown book", so this week we have one which is in that book only. As always, the chosen hymn fits the given theme and readings.

Admittedly, one or two of the hymns I have chosen since March have been a bit complicated, with obscure scriptural references, and the tunes aren't all easy, either. They have always been good, and therefore commended to you. I know there are people - and not only children - who prefer a simpler approach, where they can just worship straight from the heart. That is the sort of hymn we offer this week. There is nothing original or specially interesting I can tell you about either the words or the music, but no doubt the immediacy and the simplicity, and maybe the repetitiveness, will appeal to many. Both words and tune were written by the same person, not always a good sign, because sometimes it means they were written for a specific congregation. (I think the only hymn in the old books with both words and tune by the same person is *Never weather-beaten sail*, by Thomas Campion (1567 - 1620). I think it is best if poets write poetry and composers write music. No man can serve two masters. Even John Bell adapts tunes composed by others.) Jenny Hewer, the writer of this week's hymn, is 75 and a Methodist, but there is nothing else on the Internet about her.

In singing hymns I personally like to be stretched and made to think, and possibly learn something new. I really look forward, post virus, to a friendly discussion with anybody who values today's kind of hymn, and I hope they enjoy being reminded of it today.

Father, I place into your hands the things that I can't do.
Father, I place into your hands the times that I've been through.
Father, I place into your hands the way that I should go,
for I know I always can trust you.

Father, I place into your hands my friends and family.
Father, I place into your hands the things that trouble me.
Father, I place into your hands the person I would be,
for I know I always can trust you.

Father, we love to seek your face, we love to hear your voice.
Father, we love to sing your praise, and in your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with you and in your presence rest,
for we know we always can trust you.

Father, I want to be with you and do the things you do.
Father, I want to speak the words that you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones that you will draw to you,
for I know that I am one with you.



Icon of the Syrophenician Woman