



The Sunday Supplement

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Call to Worship

God, show your faithfulness to us,
bless us, and make your face smile upon us!
For then the whole earth will acknowledge your ways,
and all the nations of earth will know of your power to save.

**May all the nations praise you, O God;
may all the nations praise you!**

Prayer

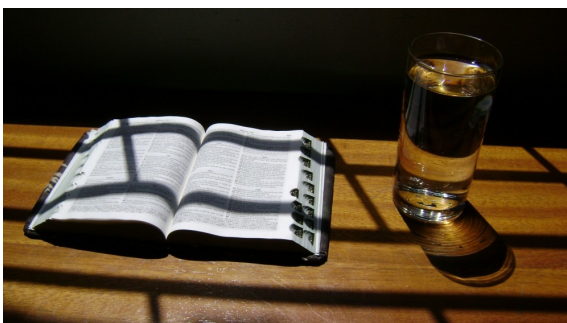
With open arms You welcome all who call on Your name -
who acknowledge You as Lord, and look to You in faith.
No one stands outside the circle of Your mercy and love.

And so we come to offer You our worship -
to declare that You are our God,
and that we are Your people,
called and chosen by You from the very beginning.

Through the presence of Your Holy Spirit
open our eyes to see You here;
open our minds to receive Your truth,
and our mouths to speak Your praise.

For You alone are God -
worthy of all praise and worship,
now and to the end of time.

Amen.



Reading

Matthew 15:21-28



Prayer of intercession

Merciful God,
In love You created us,
and in love You sustain us, day after day.
So it is with confidence that we bring our
prayers to You,
knowing that You will hear and respond.

We pray for those who are estranged from
spouse or family,
friends or neighbours;
who find it difficult to forgive past wrongs
done to them;

We pray for those who for years have
carried feelings of guilt or regret
for something they did or something they
neglected to do;
who find it difficult to ask for forgiveness or
forgive themselves;

For those who find themselves far away
from You,
struggling to overcome their doubts or
disillusionment,
and who wonder how to find their way
back;

For those watching someone they love try to
cope
with serious illness or injury,
and who long for Your miraculous
intervention;

For the many others in our world who are
suffering this day -
from grief, or loneliness, hunger, poverty,
violence or illness;

Sustain 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.

Thought for the week



Jesus and his disciples had been busy. Wherever they went people came for healing and help. Religious leaders were becoming increasingly anxious as Jesus' reputation and popularity grew. This travelling teacher and healer who neglected the handwashing rituals central to their faith could not be allowed to continue unchecked. A deputation of Pharisees and teachers of the law was sent from Jerusalem. The response they received did nothing to allay their fears.

The tide was turning for Jesus. Although popular with the crowds, his actions and words horrified the religious professionals of his day. According to Matthew's gospel, soon after this first clash Jesus and his disciples withdrew across the border to Lebanon. Their visit seems to have been brief but significant. Jesus encounter with a local woman is short but deeply significant. For Matthew, and for the disciples, this is a turning point. As Jesus interacts with the woman it becomes clear that his mission extends beyond Israel.

This story of a mother determined to get help for her troubled daughter gives just a glimpse of the future. That future that was becoming a reality by the time the gospel attributed to Matthew was written. The movement that began in Galilee soon spread to Europe and Asia. People of all nations were welcome in the emerging Christian church. A brief encounter that showed Jesus engaging with those outside his own community was a sign of things to come.

Engaging with outsiders as Jesus did is a challenge to us right now. Across the world the pandemic has forced us to remain at a distance from others. The spiritual contamination feared by the religious leaders of Jesus' day finds a parallel in the fear of infection with which we now live. Early church believers were also challenged by the radical spirit of inclusion implied by this short story. Tensions within local churches are clear from the letters Paul wrote to some of them.

One day long ago Jesus showed that race, gender, and language are of no significance to God. All are welcome in the new kingdom of which Jesus spoke. Those who are broken in body or in mind are not to be ignored. Jesus reaches out in compassion to an unseen girl because of the faith her mother showed. In that moment national boundaries and religious restrictions were swept away. God's kingdom embraces both the lost sheep of Israel and the people of faith of all nations. Healing and wholeness are for all, not just for those already within the Christian community. Those who follow Jesus are called to make that a reality in every time and place.

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!

My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand:
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty

Blessing

May God be gracious to us
And bless us
And make his face shine upon us

In the darkness that was
And the dawning that is
And the daylight that is to come

May we praise God today
And join the angels of heaven
And all of creation

In the name of the Father
And the Son
And the Spirit

Amen

