

## **Christchurch Service**

**27<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

- ✚ Welcome and Call to Worship
- ✚ Hymn – ‘Great is thy Faithfulness’
- ✚ Opening Prayers
- ✚ OT Reading – Psalm 30
- ✚ Hymn – ‘Faithful One’
- ✚ NT Reading – Mark 21-43
- ✚ Reflection – ‘How Could I?’
- ✚ The Lord’s Prayer
- ✚ Hymn – ‘Jesus, what a beautiful name’
- ✚ Sermon
- ✚ Prayers of Intercession
- ✚ Blessing
- ✚ Hymn – ‘What a friend we have in Jesus’

### **Call to Worship**

Lamentations 3:22-26

Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.

I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion;  
therefore I will wait for him.”

The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,  
to the one who seeks him;  
it is good to wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD.

### **Hymn – StF 51 ‘Great is thy faithfulness’**

### **Opening Prayers**

Great and faithful God,  
We join together in praise and adoration  
For you are the God of all grace and mercy  
And your compassion never fails.  
We see your glory in the wonders of your creation  
And in the smile of a stranger,  
In the beauty of a flower  
And in the love of our friends and family.

And so we come to song you in song and Scripture  
In reflection and in prayer  
As we worship you,  
Our great and faithful God.

Yet, loving Lord,  
We so often fall short of all that you call us to be  
And head off in our own directions  
Sure that we know best  
Or justifying our actions  
Because they bring us instant please or satisfaction.  
Great and faithful God, we are sorry.  
Sorry for all the times we have let you down  
Or hurt others or ourselves  
By what we have done, or what we have not done.  
Forgive us Lord  
And grant us once again  
That free and full forgiveness  
For you are a great and faithful God.

And so, Lord,  
We offer not just pour praise and thanksgiving,  
But our grateful thanks.  
Thank you, Lord, for the promises you make and honour.  
Promises that you will never let us go  
And that you will always answer when we call.  
Thank you that our eternal hope is found in you  
And that when we concentrate our focus on you  
We find rest and we find salvation  
For you are our great and faithful God.  
Amen.

Our Old testament Reading is one of the psalms of David. He may well have written this when he dedicated Araunah's threshing floor (which became the future site of the temple) and after God stopped the plague he had used to discipline David. So, David celebrates the deliverance God provides and acknowledges that earthly security is uncertain, but God is always faithful.

### **Psalm 30**

### **Hymn - StF 628 'Faithful One'**

### **NT Reading – Mark 5: 21-43**

## Reflection – ‘How Could I?’

### PowerPoint 1

#### How Could I?

How could I have touched him?  
Me, an unclean woman,  
Reaching out to defile his cloak,  
To defile him?

Yet, into my pain and misery,  
Into my poverty and despair,  
He came.  
Passing by, called to the synagogue ruler's home.  
An urgent call to a dying girl'  
But, I was dying inside. Slowly.  
If he can heal her, he can heal me.  
Such is his power – all I need to do is touch.  
Touch his cloak.  
He won't know.  
He won't know that I've made him unclean too.

Oh, but he did know!  
I made him stop on his urgent errand.  
Me, unclean and unworthy.  
“Who touched me?”  
Those piercing eyes sought me out.  
I had to respond: “It was me. I touched you”.

### PowerPoint 2

Then, O joy!  
In his eyes I saw his love, his tenderness, his pity, his mercy,  
And my pain, my misery, my despair?  
All gone!  
My poor faith, it was good enough for him.  
So, how could I have touched him?  
How could I not?

## The Lord's Prayer

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.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.  
Now and for ever.  
Amen

## Hymn – SoF 2, 877 'Jesus, what a beautiful name'

### Sermon

This passage from Mark's Gospel is one that I find I can connect with in many ways. It is one of the passages that is recorded in Matthew and Luke as well, although Matthew's account has much less detail in it. However, I think that one thing that fascinates me is that we have two stories in one. Now, we know that the Gospels are all carefully edited accounts of Jesus' ministry on earth and that Mark's is probably the earliest written account we have. So, to have this account of one story happening in the middle of another suggests to me that it is based on eye-witness accounts. This event, for me, happened as the writer recorded it.

So, what is happening here? Jesus and the disciples have been across the Sea of Galilee, witnessing Jesus calming the storm and healing the demonic man of his legion of demons. On their return, probably back to the town of Capernaum, they find a crowd waiting for them, including Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders. Jairus was an important man – he was an elected ruler and would have been responsible for the supervision of worship, the maintenance of the building and the running of the weekly school. Yet, he hasn't come in his official capacity. He has come as a loving father who is deeply worried about his child... and a girl child at that.

Considering women and children had an extremely low status in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish culture, making a girl child was only just above a slave, this would have been dramatic enough. Yet, Jairus also falls at Jesus' feet in a significant, and perhaps even daring act of respect and worship. We so often read passages in the Gospels where the religious leaders are criticised for their hypocrisy and lack of compassion - and quite rightly too – but Jairus is of a different mould. He recognises Jesus as the source of his hope and he also loves his daughter so much that he was willing to publicly express his desire for her to be made well and his total trust and respect that in Jesus that this need could be met. I wonder what impact this had on the crowd who were witnessing such reverence and honour?

And so, Jesus and Jairus set off, followed by the disciples and the crowd. I can imagine the noise of that crowd as they discuss what they have seen, what they think about Jairus' actions and requests, what they think might happen and how they hope that they might be witnesses to another of those reported miracles of this Rabbi Jesus. No wonder the woman with the haemorrhaging thought this might be a good time to seek her own healing. In all that hullabaloo, surely just touching the hem of Jesus' clothes would be enough and no-one would ever know.

I reflected earlier upon the woman and her response to the healing that Jesus brought her. However, now I want to focus on Jairus again. How is he feeling about this interruption? He has sought out Jesus' help at a time of great stress and distress and has probably experienced that surge of adrenaline that hope can bring when Jesus agrees to come with him and place his hands on the little girl to bring healing and wholeness. Yet, Jesus has stopped and turned his attention elsewhere. I wonder what Jairus was feeling in this moment. Was he annoyed, frustrated and pushing for Jesus to hurry up? Or, was he so shocked that Jesus had stopped that he had become frozen to the spot? We don't know, because we are not told, but I like to think that there is another option. I wonder if Jairus was so confident in Jesus' ability to heal his daughter, that he was willing to wait. I also wonder that, because he valued his daughter's life so much, he was also able to see the value in this woman. Someone who was also viewed as being not just very low in society, but one who should really be ostracised and outcast due to the very distressing condition she suffered with. Maybe in Jairus we can see a fine example of respect for all people regardless of status, gender, disability or any other prejudice. Maybe we also see that Jairus knew the value of waiting quietly, as we heard in our call to worship, for the salvation of the Lord.

What do see in these two stories, though, is people in need reaching out to Jesus and receiving healing either for themselves or for the people they love. And that is something I think is really important. We need to ask for help. We need to reach out to Jesus and seek his help, his compassion and his love because Jesus will never impose himself upon us. This is not a power relationship with Jesus dictating and deciding what is best for us. God gave us the gift of free choice and honours this completely. However, he also longs for us to take the hand that is being held out to us and enter that loving relationship where our wailing can be transformed into dancing and we become clothed with joy.

Yet, this is something we find so hard. Asking for help is not easy, as I see so often in my work as an Admiral Nurse supporting those who care for people with dementia. Often, we get called in because the carer has reached crisis point because they feel they should be coping, and that seeking support is a sign of failure. God never created us to be totally independent. He created us to be inter-dependent and it's just as OK to allow someone to help us as it is to help others ourselves. Indeed, accepting help with grace and trust is a great gift that we can actually give to those who are offering support. Don't we all like to help others? Well, we can't do that if no-one will accept that help, can we?

So reach out to Jesus and seek his healing power. Help others to reach out to the one person who can bring wholeness and restoration. Now, that doesn't mean we shouldn't seek help elsewhere. Although we know the woman with the

haemorrhaging had sought the help of doctors and had been badly let down, please do seek medical help and advice where there is concern. I suspect Jairus too had sought medical help for his daughter before turning to Jesus. Through the power of his Holy Spirit we see Jesus at work in us, his beloved Church. And it is through us being Jesus' disciples and witnesses that we shine his light into the world and let others catch a glimpse of our beloved Saviour and Friend.

At the end of the service we are going to sing one of my favourite hymns 'What a friend we have in Jesus'. The whole hymn is full of emotion and that deep, deep relationship that the writer, Joseph Scriven, had with Jesus. And, as he writes in the first verse, "O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer". Our God is a great and faithful God and his compassions never fail. He never goes back on his promises and now we have Jesus sitting at God's right side, interceding on our behalf and we have the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to guide, comfort and sustain us through the challenges of life.

Jairus and the woman reached out, in their own individual ways and Jesus responded to them with love, compassion and healing. He longs to do that for us too if we can simply ask. The response might not be what we expect or want, because we can't see the bigger picture, but it will be what we need. So, let us all turn to our greatest Friend and reach out to him. Let us wait quietly if we need to, for the salvation of the Lord *will* come, and let us know that the time will come when our hearts will sing the praises of our great and faithful God. Amen.

## **Prayers of Intercession**

### **PowerPoint for Responses**

Living God, in our prayers, we bring to you  
those who are desperate for help,  
and those who take great risks in their search for healing.  
We ask your blessing on those who transcend political and cultural barriers to take  
aid and medical care to those in greatest need –  
organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières –  
and all who work in war zones across the world,  
reaching out to the hungry, the traumatised, the displaced.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing.**

Living God, we give thanks for the best work of social media,  
that which brings into our homes the lives of the faces in the crowd,  
and draws us closer to them and their concerns.

We pray for reporters who risk their lives to bring us news,  
for photographers, camera and sound operators.

We pray for more opportunities for people's stories to be shared and heard,  
for injustices to be highlighted and positive change to be celebrated.

And this week, as the new £50 note enters circulation,  
we remember Alan Turing and how badly he was treated,  
and we pray for the families of all those pardoned posthumously,  
and for an end to human injustice.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing.**

Living God, we pray for those who fear that help will come too late,  
for all who have lost hope,

for those who have lost livelihoods, homes, and loved ones.

We pray for those waiting for hospital treatment, for transplants, for a diagnosis.

We pray especially for children who are seriously ill and for their families.

We pray too for those applying for citizenship, especially those waiting to hear if they  
will be sent back to countries they have fled from.

And we continue to pray for all who make decisions about budgets,  
those who analyse data, those who decide policy,

those who have the power to prioritise who is helped first and who must wait,

and those around the world – political leaders, scientists and medical staff alike –  
struggling to contain fresh Covid outbreaks.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing.**

Living God, we pray for the church and for one another,  
that we would reach out across barriers of culture and creed  
with faithfulness and integrity.

Help us also to reach out to you in prayer for guidance, for strength, for wisdom,  
and to reach out to one another as we journey together in Jesus' name.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing. Amen.**

**Blessing**

Lord, source of abundant life,  
send us out  
made whole by your love,  
healed by your wounds,  
fed by your gifts:  
to praise, love and serve you  
in all that lies beyond the doors of this building.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
whose coming is certain,  
and whose day draws near.

**Amen.**

**Closing Hymn – StF 531 ‘What a friend we have in Jesus’**