



**St Stephens Williamstown UCA - Service of the Word at Home/Zoom - during
Lockdown 6.0**

**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost 5th September 2021 (Proper 18B /
Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time)**

Twenty-

Prepared by Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

*Place a cross and Bible on a table. GREEN is today's Liturgical Colour. Suggested hymns, on
YouTube. Copy & Paste Links to listen.*

Readings: Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23; **Psalm 125**; James 2:1-10, (11-13), 14-17; **& Mark
7:24:37**

Gathering of the People

Greetings/Welcome: The Lord be with you. **And, also with you.**

Call to Worship inspired by Psalm 125

Trust in the Lord good people

**As the mountains surround Jerusalem so the Lord surrounds her people now and
forevermore.**

Trust in the Lord good people

Just as the Lord's love surrounds his people on earth.

In God's peace we trust.

In God's presence we gather. Amen.

Song: TIS 107 Sing praise and thanksgiving... verses 1 & 2 - Joyce Butcher
(Zoom – Mute and sing while Joyce plays) / (Home Worshipers)

https://youtu.be/_VXaVtBnmKU

Sing praise and thanksgiving, let all creatures living
now worship their maker with gladness and song;
all glory and honour we come to him bringing:

O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!

Our lives of his making he brings to their waking;
in darkness he held us in his gracious care,
now into the light we are called from our sleeping:

O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!

Netherlands folk melody (17th cent.) arr. Eduard Kremser 1838-1914

*Paul Gerhardt 1607-76 tr. Margaret Barclay (1951) adapted by Colin Alexander Gibson 1933-
Adaptation © C. A. Gibson*

Acknowledgement to Country

I acknowledge the Wurundjeri People and the land I preside from this morning and the Bunurong
People and the land you gather on, the Traditional Custodians of the Kulin Nations. We pay
respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

Opening Prayer Let us pray...

O God, Wisdom of the universe,

you bear the pain of your people, just as we bear the frustration of our times.

Grant us wisdom to discern your way, live faithfully, justly, trusting in you amid the uncertainties
we live in. Amen.

Sung Prayer of Confession – Written & Sung by Dylan & Destry (*Tune - Happy Birthday to you*)

When you made others sad

You will feel very bad

So you pray and admit it
Ask forgiveness, fix it!

When someone made you sad
You'll cry and be mad
But you still need to forgive
Ask the Lord to share love.

When you don't do the best
In despair; you will rest
Just come back to the Lord
He will make you restored!

Assurance: Hear Christ's words of grace: "Your sins are forgiven". **Thanks be to God!**

Read/Listen for God's Word - Ros Waldon

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path. Psalm 119:105

Gospel of Mark 7:24-30 – The Syrophenician Woman's Faith

Lord may your Word live in us; and bear much fruit to your glory. John 15:8

Reflection: "When desperate times call for desperate measures..." – Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

In the first story of today's gospel lectionary reading (Mark 7:24-37) we encounter the Syrophenician woman (vv.24-30) and in the second story (vv.31-37) it is a deaf man. Note that these two stories are part of the healing/miracle stories sandwiched, more or less, between the two great 'feeding' gatherings (6:30-44 Feeding the Five Thousand; 8:1-10).

Today we focus on the first story in Mark 7:24-30. We are not told whose house Jesus enters. But one assumes after ministering and preaching to the crowds and being scrutinised by the Pharisees and scribes in preceding verses and chapters of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is tired and needing rest and renewal, moving 'away' from the people.

In this story, we note a mother that is desperate; her actions describe this woman's desperation when she pushes her way through and literally throws herself at Jesus' feet. Suffice to say that in this story she had everything going against her, in her life with her daughter's well-being at risk/filled with a demon. A mother whose name is not known, as is her sick child. She is a foreigner, "the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin" (v.26).

But this desperate Syrophenician woman 'seeks' Jesus out as soon as she hears he is in town. Despite the traditions, the cultural practices and customs of her times this unashamed determined mother actively pursues Jesus for the sake and well-being; for the life of her daughter, who is sick with an unclean spirit.

Jesus' response to her manner of approach and request is met with a harsh answer. It is not the sort of answer we would expect of Jesus. One would expect that the woman's plea to Jesus, to cast out the demon from her daughter would be met with, "of course I can help"! Instead of a word of compassion, Jesus says 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" (vv.26-27). In other words, Jesus is saying that his mission is for the Jews!

Is Jesus annoyed at her unashamed manner of approach? Yes, she is not a Jew and not privy to the customs of the day.

And Jesus is probably tired, and no doubt fatigued from his ministering and walking to the crowds and being scrutinised by his own Jewish people, so it is fair to say that Jesus is just being human!

When we are tired, fatigued, or frustrated about a situation we are dealing with, and as we are living in our current times, might we also respond like Jesus did? I think the answer is, yes.

Yet, I need to ask the question, did Jesus just call or liken this 'other' human being, a stranger, migrant, who might well be a father, and compared her to a dog?! Similar comparative responses will no doubt be stories you and I have experienced.

Such a response as Jesus gave with the mention/illustration of the Woman's actions to "dogs", in my Samoan culture, would be seen as a derogatory insult as I am sure is the same in your Australian culture.

Some commentaries suggest otherwise, and that "dogs" is not as bad as it suggests. Jesus is referring to the Syrophenician woman as a pet. Others may not agree, and such a response that Jesus gave would discourage others to run away feeling embarrassed or ashamed. This was not the case and the Gentile mother persisted with

conviction, in bold faith, to say to Jesus, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” (v.28)!

There is in this story a transformation I believe that takes shape - from a ‘human’ response to a ‘divine’ response! Jesus’ prejudgement and behaviour (we all do this) was a human response. In Jesus’ later discernment from the persisting challenge is now perhaps a divine response, “For saying that, you may go-the demon has left your daughter.” (v.29).

Feet, Faith, Forgiveness – this mother was physically prepared to go out and seek, kneel, and believe in herself for the sake of her child, to challenge Jesus (and the community that day), to ask for healing of her daughter. In the same way, spiritually/divinely she walked with the divine, maintains her conviction, and both the ‘Syrophoenician Woman and her Faith’ and ‘Jesus, the Nazarene and God’s Son’, reach an understanding. I will call it, forgiveness of each other, and go on. We can too! Amen! **Thanks, be to God!**

(Home Worshipers) Song: “God will make a way...” – by Don Moen
<https://youtu.be/1xRB4rYpb1w>

Offertory - Your offering may be made through direct debit or send your cheque to the Treasurer.
Offertory Prayer – God, you provided us with daily bread to share. Bless all that we give freely in peace that you might multiply our gifts for your ministry in the world and here at home.
We pray this in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People - Ros Waldon (another version - Zoom worshipers)

(Home Worshipers - Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbours as ourselves, we offer our thanksgiving and our petitions on behalf of the church and the world.
We pray for the safety of all children, our children doing remote learning and teachers, for the vaccination rollouts, those coming to be vaccinated and all involved, for all State and Federal governments and World Leaders to govern justly and with compassion, remembering in prayer Afghanistan and her peoples. We remember our ecumenical partners, and pray for the Roman Catholic Plenary Council, our Jewish and Muslim communities, seeking unity in God. In Jesus’ name we pray. **Amen.**

Sending Out

Song: TIS 755 You shall go out with joy - Elaine & Ted on Ukulele.
(Zoom – Mute and sing at home while Elaine/Ted play/sing) / (Home Worshipers
<https://youtu.be/ivfUKd6AFXw>)

You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace, and the mountains and the hills shall break forth in singing. There’ll beshouts of joy, and the trees of the field shall clap, shall clap their hands, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands, and you’ll go out with joy.

*Stuart Dauermann 1944- arr. Paul Bateman 1954-
Steffi Geiser Rubin 1950- based on Isaiah 55:12
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Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord turn his face towards you and grant you peace. And the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen!**

To all our Fathers and Father-like figures in your lives, we pray for you. To you all, Happy Father’s Day!

Acknowledgements: Prepared by Rev S. Juliette Maua’i
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Free Prayer & adapted Prayers from UiW2 | Text Week <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers> (NRSV) Bible translation. Feasting on the Word Year B Vol 4. | CCLI License No. 5062286

