

Podcast

16th August 2020
Matthew 15: 10-28

Music

Welcome



Hello, and welcome to this week's worship podcast from New Kilpatrick Parish Church. I am Jeanette Peel, the probationary minister, at New Kilpatrick. Worship has not restarted in the church just yet, but preparations are under way for it to happen in the next few weeks. But for now, we meet again through this imagination of sound.

Welcome to our podcast, whatever day, or time you are listening, or wherever you may be listening from. We have visitors from all over the world from New Zealand to Canada from the USA to all over the UK. But even if this is your first time, or you have been here every week or something in between, welcome. The church community here at New Kilpatrick are here for you in different ways even though we are not meeting in the building - just yet.

And over the next twenty minutes or so we will spend time in each other's company, and as time moves on, we become closer to meeting in person. Until then, we listen or watch online.

In this podcast link and the script, there is a picture which shows The Canaanite Woman asking for healing for her daughter. The manuscript's biblical text is written in Naskh, the calligraphic style for writing in the Arabic alphabet and the artist, Ilyas Basim Khuri Bazzi Rahib, was most likely a Coptic monk in the late 17th century in Egypt, with the picture itself dated about 1684. Which leads us into today's story where we are in the district of Tyre and Sidon and Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman. It is a strange story, one where at first, Jesus appears to turn his back on someone who is in need, however it is only when we read the full story that we understand the truth of what it really means.

Centering

When help is needed
May we respond
When love is missing
May we provide
When forgiveness is difficult
May we find the right words

Let us open our hearts and minds
Let us leave behind the worries
And anxieties that hold us back
May we respond to the words
And the images they represent

And transform our very being

To include the excluded

To enter the place of the marginalised

To reevaluate our priorities

And discover the Kingdom of God

Is at the open table

Ready to be shared with all

Reading – Matthew 15: 10-28

Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 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.” 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.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Prayer

Let us turn our hearts and minds to God in prayer. Let us pray.



Loving God, after all this time we can only begin to imagine what returning to church will look like, sound like, feel like. What once was has changed and we must find a way to change with it. Little stays the same. Jesus’ teaching is there to transform us from what we were to what we can, and should, be.

In our stories and in our words, in our silences and in the noise of our worship, wherever we are and whoever we may be with, you are with us, changing us, holding us, encouraging us, and we give you thanks. As the woman of faith approached Jesus, filled with that hope and love, may we be able to do the same.

And now as a community of faith, wherever we may be, we come together as one voice as we say the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever.
Amen

Reflection

There are many stories of faith and hope and total surrender to God and this story of the Canaanite woman is no different in that respect. Except it is because of how the story plays out. Here, this unnamed mother takes Jesus on directly. This excluded, Canaanite woman, a non-Israelite takes Jesus on and has no intention of giving in without a fight. No wonder the disciples wanted to send her away – she is trouble, excluded, not from the in-crowd - but she is not for going anywhere. Not until she has said her piece.

But first, let us go back to a story about the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament book of 1 Kings. He too was sent to Sidon by God to a home of a woman who, along with her son, was about to die from hunger. Yet God told Elijah that he had commanded this woman to feed him which, as the story unfolds, she did and from it she finds she has abundantly more than she needs. Contrast this story to the Canaanite woman's story and how she was begging Jesus, metaphorically alluding to how the crumbs that fell beneath the table are fed to the dogs; even their needs are met. But here she was initially denied all that she needed. Two similar stories – of need - set in the same area, but with completely different outcomes. One provides for the prophet without question versus the one where the prophet appears reluctant to provide that which is needed – healing for a daughter.

I wonder if you have ever felt out of place somewhere, the outsider, the excluded one who should not be there. Wrong place, wrong time, wrong context. If not, try and imagine it. And then what if in that situation you desperately needed help and there was only one person you could turn to, but they were on the 'other side' so to speak, the leader. What

would you do? Would you face up to them and not back down until you got the help you needed, or do you just do nothing and walk away?

This unnamed woman does the former. She asked Jesus for help directly and does not give in. She refuses to let any barrier stand in her way of the love and concern she has for her sick child. She would do anything to help, including crossing those perceived impossible boundaries and walking right into the centre of what they stood for. She crossed the invisible divide, that invisible barrier between Jesus and herself and speaks directly to Jesus irrespective of the consequences. What unfolds is a verbal wrestling match where neither are willing to back down initially.

Jacob wrestling with God at Peniel has a similar outcome. Jacob was determined not to give in until he gets a blessing from God. Neither willing to back down and yet at the end both achieve what they set out to do. Jacob gets his blessing but at a price as God left him with a legacy to remind him what happened, his poorly hip.

And this short conversation between Jesus and a Canaanite woman is a message about crossing those boundaries, about daring to do what is required of you regardless of the risk. It is obeying the rules by disobeying the rules. Think of the Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son story from last week. Yet the Church is still a place where there are invisible boundaries to those not regarded as being 'one of us.' The rules that remain in place. The boxes that need ticked before you are acceptable and then accepted.

Women were only accepted to be ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in 1968, and it took until 2016 for ministers in a same-sex marriage to be accepted. How many other contexts can we see this exclusion raising its ugly head: slavery, people trafficking, refugees, people risking all to cross the Channel to seek a safe place to be and to live. And what happens? News headlines and people speak out, that they are not the same as us, have no right to be here or treated equally just because... I saw a cartoon the other day. A large navy ship or something similar with the captain shouting, "Where are you from?" And from this tiny picture of a dinghy filled with people, and a voice calls out, "earth."



Simon Kneebone

So where does this all fit in with today's reading? Just like the Canaanite woman taking on Jesus, it was her resistance to constantly being put down, resilience to keep going in the face of opposition and adversity, and a tenacity to win Jesus over, with words and wisdom that enabled this woman to not shrink away. She crossed the boundary.

It is only when we *stand with*, and *use our voices* for, all people who are excluded because of their colour, culture, religious views, gender or sexuality, that we understand the gospel message of love for our neighbour. It is only when we *hold people up* instead of pushing them down that we live out Jesus' commandments to love our neighbour. It is only when we are *prepared to take the risk* on behalf of another, that we begin to knock down the barriers and demonstrate the Kingdom of God to all. Risk means being prepared to lose it all, letting go of our attitudes and resources to aid other people. And that is what we are called to do. That is death and resurrection. Amen.

Prayer

In our time of prayer, there will be a short period of silence for your own individual prayer to God. Let us pray.

Loving God, as tragedy and wars and crisis still impact every corner of your created world, it is now more than ever that we need to recognise the connectedness that we have with each other. One world. One humanity, not them and us. It is only then, we can actively play our part in being a piece of the solution, not the problem.

Following the rail crash at Stonehaven, we remember all those killed and injured, all caught up in its aftermath, those on the train, their family and friends, and all the emergency services and volunteers that have helped. Loving God, may we offer support where we can and hold them in our prayers.

As schools prepare for their first full week back, remind us to encourage those who are still anxious, uphold those who need reassurance, and support everyone as they adapt to a new way after being away for several months. Remind us to offer them a safe place for conversation and a chance to just be when needed.

For those who are excluded, for those who feel they no longer have a voice, may we be their voice. May we stand with them and support them so that each and every person's worth is valued, and we are all held accountable for our actions.

We now bring those we know and do not know to you in prayer. The prayers of our hearts and minds for those who need our love and support. We name them in the stillness and the silence.

Gracious God, accept these, our prayers, as an action of our faith, as we step out to be the love and support and neighbour to those in need. One and all. Always. Amen.

Epilogue

May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dream no longer
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.

May we all rise to the occasions God opens for us... and waste our hearts on fear, no more.

John O'Donohue

Benediction

As we go into the world, may we see every person made in your image, loved, protected, and forgiven. May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon us and with all those we love, today, tomorrow and for evermore. Amen

Announcements

Preparations are underway for opening the church building for Sunday worship but our online worship, however, you may access it is here for you whenever you need it. Even though things are changing slowly, this part of our worship will remain.

Each week you can find us here or online at nkchurch.org.uk where you can engage with us in different ways. The church website and bulletin will keep you updated with all the latest news and projects that New Kilpatrick are engaging in.

A special thank you to Sally Mudge, who shared in our time together to make this podcast. Next week, as the crumbs under the table turn in to bread as we celebrate the Sacrament of Communion together. So please if you can, join us.

Music