

# 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 – Morning Service

Olwen Meller

## Call to Worship

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. The Gospel tells us that Jesus healed people by touching them. He touched them in various ways, with his words, with his hands and with his love.

## StF 36 – There's a quiet understanding

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| 1) There's a quiet understanding<br>When we're gathered in the Spirit,<br>It's a promise that he gives us,<br>When we gather in his name.<br>There's a love we feel in Jesus,<br>There's a manna that he feeds us,<br>It's a promise that he gives us,<br>When we gather in his name. | 2) And we know when we're together,<br>Sharing love and understanding,<br>That our brothers and our sisters<br>Feel the oneness that he brings.<br>Thank you, thank you, thank you, Jesus,<br>For the way you love and feed us,<br>For the many ways you lead us;<br>Thank you, thank you, Lord;<br>Thank you, thank you, Lord. |
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## Opening Prayers

Lord, in this holy place, at this holy time, we, your people made holy, acknowledge your Lordship, over your world, over your Church, over our lives. Lord, we are yours. We come in homage. We come in wonder. We come in trust, trusting that the presence of your life-giving Spirit will transform our act of worship into an offering worthy of the Lord of Lords. Lord of all, as we gather to worship You, we ask for hearts open to your presence. Fill this place with Your Spirit and our souls with your peace. Let every song, prayer and word spoken glorify You and draw us closer in communion with You and each other.

## Prayer of Confession

Lord we find it hard to like everyone, and to love them seems impossible. Christ told us that your love is for the whole world, yet our sights are set so much lower and we still fail to love our neighbours as ourselves. We confess our indifference to others and our slavish concern for ourselves. We have tried to break out of this self-centred imprisonment and open our eyes to the cry of the lost and the despairing. We ask not simply for you to forgive us our failures but that the power of your Spirit will empower us to be like mirrors of your love for the whole world. In the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen**

## 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## StF 242 – A new commandment

A new commandment I give unto you:  
That you love one another as I have loved you,  
That you love one another as I have loved you.

By this the world shall know you are my disciples  
If you have love for one another.  
By this the world shall know you are my disciples  
If you have love for one another.

*Anonymous*

### Reading: Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered round him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, 'My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.' So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed round him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realised that power had gone out from him. He turned round in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' 'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, "Who touched me?"' But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said. 'Why bother the teacher anymore?' Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.' He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.' But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha koum!' (which means 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

### Reflection on Mark

'Do not fear, only believe,' Jesus says to Jairus. It is easier said than done, of course, with his daughter dead and the house full of the sound of wailing mourners. It is also quite ironic, in that it is fear of just this moment that has driven Jairus to Jesus in the first place. Both of the people that Jesus encounters in today's Gospel reading are driven by one kind of fear so strongly that it overcomes all kinds of other fears that they might be expected to feel. Jairus' overwhelming fear is that his daughter might die. Mark's storytelling never wastes words but he doesn't need to describe how much Jairus loves his daughter, his actions make it crystal clear. He is risking the disapproval of his community, in which he is a leading figure. He is pushing aside his own inevitable doubts and uncertainties about who Jesus is and by what power he performs healings. He is prepared to risk everything for the faint hope of life for his daughter. So he elbows his way to the front of the whispering, nudging crowd and makes his demand of Jesus. And Jesus goes with him - no words said, no questions asked.

The nameless woman, too, has one fierce fear that puts all the others in the shade. Her fear is that she will never be well again, she will always be bone tired, pale, thin, listless and in pain. But also she will always be alone, never full part of the community, no one to help her bear her condition. So she braves the fear of discovery and rejection by the crowd, the fear of a painful, embarrassing exposure if the bandages and extra clothes she has bound around herself do not hold, the fear that she will not reach Jesus through the crowds or that if she does, it will be useless. You can tell that her driving fear is long term, that she has lived with it for so long that it has changed her character completely.

Once presumably she was reasonably well off, comfortable enough, at any rate, to afford a lot of doctors and confident enough to go on spending her money in expectation of a cure. But now she is poor and cowed and tired. She is not like Jairus who, even in the extremity of his fear, is a man of authority who expects to be heard and to get his own way. This woman is not even intending to ask for what she needs because she is sure the answer will be no. But she has just enough desperation left to try and steal it. Her chance comes as the crowd begins to move. Jesus and Jairus are walking fast to get to the sick child and the crowd is streaming around them, thinner in some places where people are not hurrying to be at the front. The woman seizes her chance while the important men are concentrating on their important things. She reaches out her hand and brushes Jesus' clothes as they blow out behind him with the speed of his walking.

She had meant to turn away at once and hobble off home and wait and hope. But she is shocked into stillness at her body's reaction. How long is it since she felt well? So long she can hardly remember the feeling. And in that one awed moment she hears the dreaded question 'Who touched me?' She could have stood silent but part of her wants the crowd to see what has happened to her, to make it real, to assure her that she isn't imagining it, even if she gets into terrible trouble. It is strange to have all the eyes on her when she has spent years with eyes that avoided her or slid away from her fast. Most of the eyes are not friendly. She is just a distraction, kneeling there, abject and shaking. The crowd wants to get on to Jairus' house to see the real drama unfold. They expect Jesus to push her away, perhaps even to make her ill again. Instead, he tells her she has done right and that her health is what she deserves and has won for herself.

Jairus must be in an agony of impatience while all this is going on. He knows that every second counts and, sure enough, when they get home it is too late. Even in the midst of his terrible grief he can spare a little hatred for the insignificant woman whose healing has cost him his daughter. Don't be afraid Jesus says, 'God's love is not that small. There is enough for the woman and your daughter. There is enough for all.'

Think about the two stories in this passage side by side. One is of a senior figure in the community who might expect Jesus to help him, the other is about a person at the bottom of the heap because she is ritually unclean and because of that she is an outcast. Yet Jesus treats them equally because the need of each is important to him and he looks at the person not at their position in society. We never hear of Jesus refusing to heal anyone. Think about Jesus' reply to the woman. His words are carefully chosen for he says '*Go in peace and be freed from your suffering*'.

The order was very important. 'Go in peace' tells us nothing about her cure but everything about her wholeness. Jesus is willing her back to full life and the physical cure would be of no consequence if she was left in mental despair. Our society today pays so much attention to material things, pandering to our physical comforts and turning luxuries into necessities. We try to prolong beauty with expensive lotions and prolong life by shelves of vitamins. We join health clubs to keep fit and build up our muscles. But how much attention do we give to our spiritual well-being? And that's where church comes in – it's a health club for our spirits. Think about the humility of the woman who wanted only to be near to Jesus. Think about her faith that if she just touches his cloak she will be healed. Think what it meant that Jesus was aware that power had gone out of him. Think about how the power flows through him but is always replenished, always available to heal the next person in need.

## StF 615 – Let love be real

- 1) Let love be real, in giving and receiving,  
Without the need to manage and to own;  
A haven free from posing and pretending,  
Where every weakness may be safely known.  
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,  
Give me your love wherever we may go.
  - 2) Let love be real, not grasping or confining,  
That strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;  
That helps us face the risk of truly living,  
And makes us brave to be what we might be.  
Give me your strength when all my  
words are weakness;  
Give me your love in spite of all you know.
  - 3) Let love be real, with no manipulation,  
No secret wish to harness or control;  
Let us accept each other's incompleteness,  
And share the joy of learning to be whole.  
Give me your hope through dreams  
and disappointments;  
Give me your trust when all my failings show.
- Ch) *As God loves us, so let us love each other:  
With no demands, just open hands  
and space to grow.*

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## Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:7,9,13-15

But since you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you – see that you also excel in this grace of giving. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: ‘The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.’

## Reflection on 2 Corinthians

In this reading Paul is saying to the people of Corinth that being a Christian is more than just believing in God and in Jesus Christ but it is also about the way we behave towards other people, particularly those who are less fortunate than ourselves. The woman who came to Jesus was a deeply wounded person. In her case the wound was visible but people can be wounded without it appearing on the outside. They may carry invisible wounds; feelings of rejection, failure, worthlessness, loneliness, depression, bitterness and so on. All of us need healing.

Even when he was surrounded by people, if someone touched him and was healed, Jesus knew it. Why was this? It was because each cure took something out of him. In the words of the Gospel ‘*power went out of him.*’

To achieve success at something we have to put something of ourselves into it, so much so that we may feel drained after it. This is especially true of healing. Healing can be exhausting and painful for the healer. We can’t take away suffering without putting something of ourselves into it, if only by trying to understand the sufferer and drawing closer to him or her. Every time Jesus healed someone it took something out of him. The greatness of Jesus was that he was prepared to pay the price of helping others. We are following in his footsteps when we give of ourselves in service.

Our lives are continually touching the lives of other people. Each of us is capable of doing some healing. We may not be able to cure but it is within our power to care and caring is a very healing thing. A compassionate heart can heal almost anything. With a little care we could ease a troubled mind. With a little of our time we could ease the pain of loneliness for someone. With a little sympathy we could heal a wounded heart. Each act of caring will cost us something.

Then there is the ministry of just being there with the sick person. It is a beautiful ministry but some have a real gift for this. My friend Judith spent hour upon hour sitting at the bedside of folk who were sick or suffering and many who were dying. Her husband Keith was a Methodist Minister.

Sometimes there is nothing we can do for the sufferer and nothing we can say either. In that case our only ministry is simply being there with them, like Mary at the foot of the cross, and offer them something very precious - offer them human comfort. Just by being there, by standing alongside them, we save the sufferer from feeling abandoned and offer them something very precious - human comfort.

Healing is not a task only for the individual. If we can create communities where people can get together, work together and support each other, then healing becomes a part of everyday life. Each of us has the capacity to heal; a kind word can heal a wounded spirit, a kind deed can heal a wounded heart. We ask God that his love may overflow through us into the lives of all whom we touch, that our hands may bring comfort to strangers and be a blessing on those we love, and that all who need healing may be at peace and free from their suffering. Amen.

### **StF 611 – Brother, sister let me serve you**

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| 1) Brother, sister let me serve you<br>Let me be as Christ to you;<br>Pray that I may have the grace<br>To let you be my servant, too.             | 4) I will weep when you are weeping,<br>When you laugh I'll laugh with you;<br>I will share your joy and sorrow<br>Till we've seen this journey through. |
| 2) We are pilgrims on a journey,<br>And companions on the road;<br>We are here to help each other<br>Walk the mile and bear the load.              | 5) When we sing to God in heaven<br>We shall find such harmony,<br>Born of all we've known together<br>Of Christ's love and agony.                       |
| 3) I will hold the Christ light for you<br>In the night-time of your fear;<br>I will hold my hand out to you,<br>Speak the peace you long to hear. | 6) Brother, sister let me serve you<br>Let me be as Christ to you;<br>Pray that I may have the grace<br>To let you be my servant, too.                   |

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### **Prayers of Intercession**

Loving God, we pray for your Church here in the Vale of Stour. We pray for our members, our leaders, ministers and local preachers. We ask for your blessing on our work as we seek to create a church community that welcomes visitors and strangers, provides a refuge for those who feel threatened or alone, a refuge from the troubles of this world.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Loving God, as we see the brokenness of our world, we pray for healing among the nations, for food where there is hunger; for freedom where there is oppression; for joy where there is pain; that your love may bring peace to all your children.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Holy God, we thank you for the joy of human love, and for all those among whom we live and work. We pray especially for those among our friends and families who do not know you, or whose faith has been shaken. Help them to see that you are always there for them in the times of doubt and trouble.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Merciful God, when our lives feel chaotic and desolate, because of illness or sorrow, help us to hear your holy word, for by that word Jesus healed and made people whole. We pray for those who have requested our prayers .... help them to triumph over their adversities, and help them put their trust in you and in the knowledge and skills of the doctors and nurses who are treating them.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Loving God we pray for those saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them, for members of our families who have died and whose anniversary we recall. Help us experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit within us, and the fellowship of the church family around us until we are reunited once more in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Gracious God, help us to know that the one who healed the sick around the Sea of Galilee some 2000 years ago, is present with us day by day and that he cares for us as he did those people of old. Help us to trust more fully and more deeply in you in all that we are involved in within the days ahead.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer Amen**

### **StF 620 – Thou God of truth and love**

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| 1) Thou God of truth and love,<br>We seek thy perfect way,<br>Ready thy choice to approve,<br>Thy providence to obey:<br>Enter into thy wise design,<br>And sweetly lose our will in thine.   | 4) Then let us ever bear<br>The blessed end in view,<br>And join, with mutual care,<br>To fight our passage through;<br>And kindly help each other on,<br>Till all receive the starry crown. |
| 2) Why hast thou cast our lot<br>In the same age and place,<br>And why together brought<br>To see each other's face,<br>To join with loving sympathy,<br>And mix our friendly souls in thee?  | 5) O may thy Spirit seal<br>Our souls unto that day,<br>With all thy fullness fill,<br>And then transport away:<br>Away to our eternal rest,<br>Away to our Redeemer's breast.               |
| 3) Didst thou not make us one,<br>That we might one remain,<br>Together travel on,<br>And share our joy and pain,<br>Till all thy utmost goodness prove,<br>And rise renewed in perfect love? |  |

*Charles Wesley*

### **Blessing**

May the Lord bless you with a faith that never falters.

May he inspire you to lead others to Christ by the way you live.

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and for evermore. **Amen**