## Written Service Dorset South and West Circuit 16 August 2020

## Prepared by Revd Jean Quick

## The Blessedness of Unity

## How very good and pleasant it is

## when kindred live together in unity!

## Psalm 133:1

**Call to worship**

As I prepared this service we where facing another few days of glorious sunshine. I hope the sun will still be shining when you come to use this service. Let us pause for a moment and think about the wonderful summer days we have known. When it seems like the sunlight is gilding the glories of God’s creation.....

Think of the very best summer day you have enjoyed

and in a moment give thanks as you sing or read **the Hymn...**

Summer suns are glowing over land and sea,

happy light is flowing, bountiful and free.

Everything rejoices in the mellow rays,

all earth's thousand voices swell the psalm of praise.

God's free mercy streameth over all the world,

and his banner gleameth, everywhere unfurled.

Broad and deep and glorious as the heaven above,

shines in might victorious his eternal love.

Lord, upon our blindness thy pure radiance pour;

for thy loving-kindness make us love thee more.

And when clouds are drifting dark across our sky,

then, the veil uplifting, Father, be thou nigh.

We will never doubt thee, though thou veil thy light:

life is dark without thee; death with thee is bright.

Light of Light! shine o'er us on our pilgrim way,

go thou still before us to the endless day.

**Prayers of adoration and confession**

Creator God who breathed this world into being,

who is discernible within the harmony of nature,

the perfection of a butterfly's wing,the grandeur of a mountain range,

the soaring eagle and humming bird,

thank you for this world which you have created.

Thank you for summer sun, which reminds us

that your creative breath is still alive and active.

Thank you for the warmth of your love, sustaining this world,

your garden.

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**A prayer of confession** ......(adapted from words by John Birch).

Lord when we think about how we can glimpse you within creation

it is a beautiful thought,

But it also tells us that you desire to be seen,

to be found and known.

Forgive us for the times when we fail to see or acknowledge your presence

and the presents you give to us through your creation.

Open our eyes, Lord,

as we walk through this world,

feel the wind and sunshine,

see the majesty of creation

unfolding before our eyes.

Help us to see you and rejoice.

**Amen**.

**Bible reading...Matthew 15: 10-20**

Things That Defile

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 offence 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.’

**Hymn** **STF 685**

In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north,

but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.

In him shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find;

his service is the golden cord close-binding humankind.

Join hands then all the human race, whate'er your nation be;

all children of the living God are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west, in him meet south and north;

all Christlike souls are one in him, throughout the whole wide earth. John Oxenham, pseud. (1852-1941)

**Reflection**

I wonder what a current rendition of this first part of the gospel reading for today might look like? Certainly we would react to the last words...and we would want to replace them with, ‘wash your hands and frequently!’ Preferably while singing happy birthday to get the length of time right for the wash!

We have learnt a lot about how even the tiniest droplets that come out of our mouth can defile in such a devastating way. Equally the tiniest innuendo that comes out of our mouths can defile and degrade humanity. The recent ‘Black lives matter’ campaigns, I am sure have caused us all to think again about what we didn’t even recognise as demeaning thoughts and words towards others.

Another lesson Covid behaviour is trying to teach us is also right there in our text. Jesus’ comment about the Pharisees. It’s so hard to walk away when we feel some injustice needs challenging. However we need to weigh up what is important and what is not. Challenging those who for whatever reason choose to invade ‘our space’. Feeling aggrieved that their idea of social distance, doesn’t match ours. Or challenging the non mask wearer? There are lots of things we could rise to, in what we might believe is all about staying safe during these unprecedented times.

However are we being like the Pharisees? Rigidly quoting the letter of the law but with what kind of spirit? The spirit of charity and kindness? Or some self righteous meanness of spirit that demeans us?

We need to walk away from the unimportant and the things we cannot change and to be an example by our good deeds.

I was in a store recently buying a face mask and hand sanitiser as I had forgotten the latter and torn the mask I carried in my handbag.

A young woman followed me in and was shouted at for not having a mask on. I was trying to find a pink one amongst all the black ones! This young woman didn’t respond to the aggressive comment but instead asked me if she could help and dug right to the bottom of the huge basket for a pink mask for me and for herself, then she went in search of some hand sanitiser gel for me. I was so grateful. Out of this woman came good intentions and a good call to ignore responding negatively to the aggressive comments made by someone who hopefully was not thinking clearly.

Out of the heart all too easily evil intentions can come forth, we need God’s Spirit to overwhelm and sanitise our actions. So that we cause blessings to flow and not curses.

Evil intentions..’These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.’...as long as you slap on the hand sanitiser gel!

A short further reflection before we pray based on the second part of today’s gospel reading.

**Matthew 15: 21-28**

The Canaanite Woman’s Faith

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.

I came across this reflection from rootsontheweb material for worship and I commend it to you.

Try to prayerfully answer the questions. Perhaps the second question might be one to think about during the week ahead.

1. How important is kindness in the world today, and why?

2. Do Watch a favourite film and write down all the words of kindness and affirmation you hear.

3. Spell out the word PRAYER as an acrostic and write something next to each letter to pray for.

Here’s an example:-

**P** – Peace in places where there is fighting.

**R** – Rest and relaxation over the summer.

**A** – Action for the climate crisis.

**Y** – Young people waiting for exam results.

**E** – Everyone I meet today.

**R** – Remembering people I miss a lot.

**Our** **Prayers today for others and ourselves**. (Taken with permission from © ROOTS for Churches Ltd 2020)

The Canaanite woman sought your help. She loved her daughter so much, she was so desperately in need, that she wouldn’t give up till she had her answer.

Lord, may we learn from this woman, to wait on you expectantly, patiently, persistently, doggedly.

Grant us the courage of our convictions when we truly believe we are doing your will.

We pray today for those who feel excluded, whatever their situation, whatever the reason:

for prisoners, refugees, the homeless;

for the sick, the mentally unstable;

for any who feel that they are outsiders.

We pray for ourselves when our faith is weak,

or we feel that we don’t belong.

Lord in your Mercy hear our prayers and teach us to be merciful. **Amen**.

**A personal prayer**

Lord, the Pharisees were offended by your words.

You could have been offended by the Canaanite woman’s words.

I ask that, as I go about my business, I will take the time to consider each person I meet as unique,

special to you, and worthy of my listening ear.

May I not be offended just because something is out of my comfort Zone.

Lord in your Mercy hear my prayer and teach me to be merciful. **Amen.**

**The offering..**..

As you say the Lord’s Prayer notice how much you ask for, for yourself?.....bread, forgiveness, strength to resist temptation, preserved from evil.

The prayer begins and ends with an acknowledgment of the Glory of God

and that we want Gods kingdom to prosper.

So as you say the familiar words of the prayer, what will you offer to God

In order that His kingdom can be forever and for all?

Your money for church and charity. Simple acts of kindness to those you will encounter this week ......

............offer these and more as you say.....

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**STF 705**

It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand; it is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land;

it is God who builds the City on the Rock and not on sand: may the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us to use the present hour; who recalls us to our senses when a nation's life turns sour;

in the discipline of freedom we shall know God's saving power: may the living God be praised!

When a thankful nation, looking back, has cause to celebrate those who win our admiration by their service to the state;

when self-giving is a measure of the greatness of the great: may the living God be praised!

God reminds us every sunrise that the world is ours on lease: for the sake of life tomorrow may our love for it increase;

may all races live together, share its riches, be at peace: may the living God be praised!

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

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**The Blessing**

As the sun rises, Lord, let your light shine on us. The warmth of your Presence, the brightness of your love,

the radiance of your joy, the shining of your hope. **Amen**

(Adapted from a Celtic Prayer About Work in his book Power Lines by David Adam)