

After the opening hymn we going to have a video quiz. The idea is to try to write the colour of the text and ignore what the word says. For example, the word on screen might be red, but it's typed in in the colour yellow. The answer will be yellow because that's even though it's red.

Call to worship:

Come, with purpose,
into the presence of the living God.
Come to worship, and to be amazed,
to discover and learn new things.
Come, knowing that God welcomes us all with open arms.
Amen.

Praise: These are the days of Elijah
These are the days of Elijah,
Declaring the word of the Lord
And these are the days of Your servant Moses,
Righteousness being restored.
And though these are days of great trial,
Of famine and darkness and sword,
Still, we are the voice in the desert crying
"Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

Behold He comes riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call,
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.

These are the days of Ezekiel,
The dry bones becoming as flesh,
And these are the days of Your servant David,
Rebuilding a temple of praise.
These are the days of the harvest,
The fields are as white in Your world,
And we are the labourers in Your vineyard,
Declaring the word of the Lord!

Behold He comes riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call,
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.

Colours Video

All Age talk

So how did we all get on? You may have been distracted by what the word said and not recognised the colour of the word. In today's service we are being reminded that we mustn't be distracted from the things that draw us away from God.

We need to try and keep our eyes focussed on Him and do the things He wants us to do. Sometimes life can easily get in the way, and we get easily distracted. God call us to love him with all our heart, mind and soul, and love others as well. If we are to take this seriously it means loving others even when they are different to us, or maybe when we don't particularly like them.

Praise: Everywhere around me

Prayers

Lord God, as we come before you now,
we open our hearts to you.
Help us to see that we can learn so much from others,
even from those with whom we think
we may not share much in common.
Make us willing to stand out from the crowd,
to hear your voice, and act upon it.

Lord, sometimes we look as though we are listening to others.
We may even make all the right noises!
But we confess that our attention is often anywhere but
where it is supposed to be.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Sometimes we are too distracted by our own concerns.
We care only for ourselves,
and listen only to those who say what we want to hear.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Sometimes we don't listen to people
because we don't like them,
or because they are different from us.
Sometimes we have bad or unhelpful thoughts.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

Sometimes we don't listen to you, Lord,
because we are too busy,
or a bit frightened about what you might say to us.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities. Amen.

Living Lord,
we praise you that you are a God who loves.
You have given us a marvellous world,
to live in and to share with all your people.

You, O God, love everyone equally,
and we thank you that we are each unique.
We thank you that each one of us
has so much to give – and to receive – from each other.
Thank you for each new experience that you give us. **Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 15:21 – 28

Message

This passage from Matthew describes one of those difficult moments in the life of our Lord. What makes it so difficult is how harsh Jesus sounds, and maybe even a bit rude. Firstly, he refuses to answer a woman pleading for his help, then he denies that he has anything to offer "her kind," and finally he likens her to a dog before the sheer force of her faith changes something in him and he decides to answer her prayer after all.

The problem is that she is a Canaanite, one of the great unwashed with whom observant Jews of Jesus' time had little contact. She comes from the coastal region of Syria, where strange gods are worshiped and ritual laws of cleanliness are unknown. She is a Gentile, in other words, which is the biblical term for everyone who is not a Jew, and as such she is both an outsider and an untouchable.

Earlier, in the tenth chapter of Matthew, it is Jesus himself who warns his disciples to steer clear of Gentiles, reminding them that they have been sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. The only catch is that the lost sheep do not seem to want to be found. In spite of Jesus' undivided attention to them, they are not rushing to respond to his shepherd's call.

Jesus was in the middle of one of the busiest times in his earthly ministry. Everywhere he turned, he was surrounded by need - need and people who wanted what he could do for them, but who remained blind to who he was.

Stress levels must have been huge, and then along comes this Canaanite woman crying out to him to heal her daughter- one more of the needy multitudes who wanted something from him - only this one does a shocking thing: She calls him by name, "O Lord, Son of David."

It is the title reserved for the Messiah, the title his own people have withheld from him. When this woman addresses him as the Son of David, she names something in him that even his own disciples have failed to recognize.

However, despite this, he ignores her, hoping she'll go away.

But she won't give up - "Lord, help me," she says, and I can only imagine that his blood pressure must have risen rather sharply. Can't she hear? He has told her "no", told her that she is not his sheep, but she does not seem to have got the message, so he says it again, louder and clearer than before. "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs," he says, a cruel rebuff if there ever was one.

I mean you have to draw the line somewhere don't you? You have to decide what you can do and what you cannot do, whom you can help and whom you cannot help, or you will be eaten alive. That is a point most of us reach, anyhow, and often we decide to draw the line around our own families and friends, around our own church and communities and concerns.

But the Canaanite woman simply will not budge. Who was going to blink first? Certainly not this lady! "Yes, Lord," she says when he calls her a dog, "yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." When she says that, something in Jesus snaps.

His anger dissolves. Something in him is rearranged and changed forever, a change you can hear in his voice. "O woman, great is your faith," he says to her. "Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter is healed instantly.

In that moment he comes to a new understanding of who he is and what he has been called to do. He is no longer a Messiah called only to the lost sheep of Israel, but God's chosen redeemer of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike, beginning with this Canaanite woman.

Faith works like a lever on him, opening his arms wider and wider until there is room for the whole world in them, until he allows those arms to be nailed wide open on the cross. Isn't that the way it goes? Over and over, God's call to us means pushing old boundaries, embracing outsiders, giving up the notion that there is not enough of us to go around.

We may resist; we may even lose our tempers, but the call of God is insistent, as insistent as the Canaanite woman who would not leave Jesus alone. The call of God keeps after us, calling us by

name, until finally we step over the lines we have drawn for ourselves and discover a whole new world on the other side.

The best lesson, I suppose, is that God's face can turn up anywhere, and especially on the far side of the lines we draw to protect ourselves. The call of God is insistent, and whenever we limit who we will be to other people or who we will let them be for us, God gets to work, rubbing out the lines we have drawn around ourselves and calling us into the limitless country of his love.

Responding to that call can be a painful difference - as painful as it was for Jesus to hear a Canaanite call him Lord when his own family would not; as painful as it was for him to step beyond generations of tradition and respond to her faith; as painful as it is for any one of us to step over the lines we have drawn to protect ourselves and explore unknown terrain.

Let go! Step out! Look a Canaanite in the eye, knock on a strange door, ask an outsider what his life is like, trespass an old boundary, enter a new relationship, push a limit, take a risk, give up playing it safe!

You have nothing to lose but your life the way it has been, and there is lots more life where that came from. And if you get scared, which you will, and if you get mad, which you probably will too, remember today's story.

With Jesus as our model, we are called to step over the lines we have drawn for ourselves, not because we have to, and not because we ought to, or even because we want to, but because we know that it is God's own self who waits for us on the other side.

Praise: There's a wideness in God mercy
There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in Heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.
But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.
There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed;

There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the Head.
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of our mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.

Prayers of Intercession

Benediction

We go out today,
renewed and strengthened in faith,
ready to serve you, Lord,
and find you in the people we meet.
We go out to follow you, and our hearts.
Lead us, good Lord.

Amen.

Praise: And can it be
1 And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

Refrain:
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me!

2 'Tis mystery all! Th'Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more. [Refrain]

3 He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me. [Refrain]

4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee. [Refrain]

5 No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own. [Refrain]