

Parish of Central Exeter

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion

1st Sunday after Trinity 11 June 2023

Seeking the touch of God

Reflections by Sheila, Intercessions from Caroline. Many thanks to you both.



Preparing for worship

We gather:
a community of faith in God's subversive world.
We gather to celebrate
that no darkness can extinguish light,
to remember
that love will always be more powerful than death,
and to trust that
peace will always be stronger than violence.

We gather,
people of faith in the light of God's world.
Welcome to worship.

(written by Cheryl Lawrie and posted on [hold this space])

Opening Prayer

(Based on the second part of the Gospel reading)

They risked it all to come to him:

Jairus,
risked his pride,
kneeling to a carpenter,
begging for his daughter's life,

The woman with the blood risked
shame and disgrace
heaped upon her
by the crowd.

O Christ,
we are just like Jairus.
And we bleed like the woman.

We want to touch you
with the faith
you give
us.

Gathering hymn

Immortal Love for ever Full'. This was written by the American Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier in 1866. The tune is 'Bishophthorpe' written by the English composer and organist Jeremiah Clarke in 1700. It is sung here by the choir of St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HCBH336_nw

Words are on the screen.

Call to confession based on the Gospel Reading.

God calls us in our lives to take a risk,
to be like the woman in the gospel
who reaches out to Jesus for healing for herself;
or the father who risks the scorn of others
to bring Jesus to his dying daughter.
Let us ponder for a moment the places in our lives
where we may resist turning to God for healing and change.

(silence)

We confess our weaknesses.

When we resist your call to open our hearts to allow
the freshness of your grace to enter:

God have mercy.

When we close our eyes to your new and unexpected possibilities
of healing and reconciliation.

Christ have mercy.

When we let fear overwhelm us,
and cling to the security of what we know
instead of risking new steps toward your freedom and justice:

God have mercy.

Assurance of Grace

God's mercies are fresh every morning.
In Christ God offers forgiving grace
and welcome into a community of trust, abundance, and hope.

Let us give thanks for the mercy of God,
and pass the peace of Christ in community among us.

(written by Rev. Susan A. Blain, and posted on the Worship Ways website.)

Alternative collect for First Sunday after Trinity

God of truth, help us to keep your law of love
and to walk in ways of wisdom,
that we may find true life
in Jesus Christ your Son.

Old Testament Reading

Hosea 6:4-6

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?

What shall I do with you, O Judah?

Your love is like a morning cloud,

like the dew that goes early away.

⁵ Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;

I have slain them by the words of my mouth,

and my judgement goes forth as the light.

⁶ For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,

the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

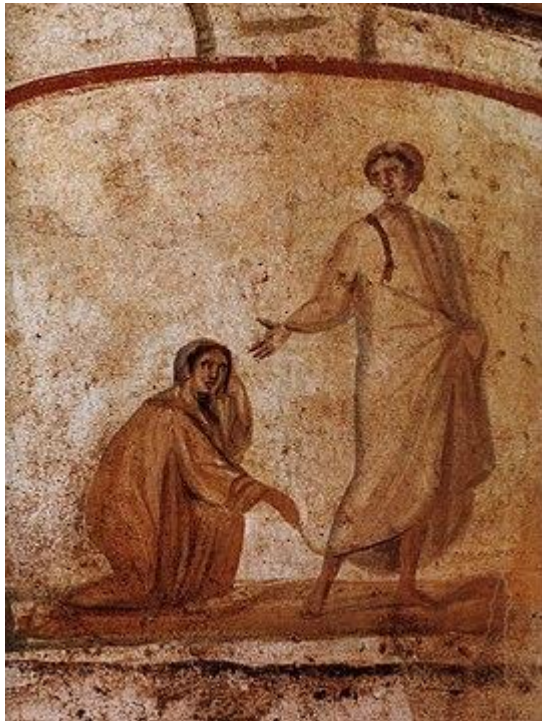
⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. ¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax-collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' ¹² But when he heard this, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'

¹⁴ *Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often but your disciples do not fast?'* ¹⁵ *And Jesus said to them, 'The wedding-guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.'* ¹⁶ *No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷ Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.'*

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, 'My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.' ¹⁹ And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰ Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, ²¹ for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.' ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, 'Take heart, daughter;

your faith has made you well.’ And instantly the woman was made well. ²³ When Jesus came to the leader’s house and saw the flute-players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, ‘Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ And the report of this spread throughout that district.

NRSV: Anglicised Edition © 1989, 1995 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ USA



***The woman who touches Christ's cloak.
Painting on the wall of the Catacombs of
Marcellinus and Peter, Rome, Fourth Century.***

Hymn

‘Lord, we come to ask your healing’. Sung here by the choir of St Lawrence’s Church, Chorley. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbbcjEsiwb8>

Reflection

‘Learn what this means, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”’.

The quote from Hosea 6:6 occurs twice in Matthew’s gospel. Each time it is in a discussion with the Pharisees who are questioning the behaviour of Jesus and his disciples. In 9:13 Jesus’s comment comes after they criticised his dinner company while in 12:7 his words follow their disapproval of the disciples plucking some grain on the sabbath. The implication is that their priorities are wrong. That God longs for people to show mercy or steadfast love or compassion more than ritual worship.

Matthew summarises the 21 verses in Mark of the raising of Jairus's daughter and the healing of the woman with internal bleeding to 9. The focus is on Jesus's actions responding at once to the request from the religious leader and to the woman's touch. Through these chapters in Matthew Jesus meets individuals calling them to follow him and changing their lives. This is still true today.

In the latest CMS magazine, there is the moving story of Dayle from the Canklow estate in Rotherham who cried out to God when her cat was very ill and promised to buy a Bible if her cat survived. The cat did and she started reading the bible and saw it as a guide to live a happy and fulfilled life. Then she felt pulled to go to church, 'a feeling in my stomach'. She tried to ignore this as she was scared to enter Rotherham Minister but once inside the feeling in her stomach disappeared. After a few months she joined a group, all asking questions about God and wanting to learn more about Jesus. Slowly her life changed as she found Jesus. She started a monthly litter pick in the area and a weekly crafter's group.

Many people come into our churches and leave prayer requests (on the boards in St Olave's and St Pancras and in the basket in St Stephen's). Here are people reaching out to touch Jesus, often crying out for themselves or for members of their family or friends for healing or reconciliation. Sometimes there are prayers of thanks and statements of faith. We hold their prayers before God today.

The woman in the gospel story was excluded from participation in the synagogue and life of the community through her disability even though it was hidden. Such situations can be true for some women today. Another report in the CMS magazine was about the launch of the UK's first audio bible voiced solely by women on International Women's Day in March. This was the idea of Revd Katy Partridge who explained "The way women are treated in religious spaces impacts the way they see God. Listening to the Bible not only has the potential to bring a new vibrancy to the words of Scripture, but also makes it more accessible to those who find reading a struggle, or those with visual impairments. A woman's voice is particularly helpful to those for whom male voices can be triggering. Such as women who have experience domestic abuse, or human trafficking." Her Audio Bible is free to listen to via the website heraudiobible.org.uk

We pray using one of the lectionary collects written by Janet Morley in the 1980s.

O Christ for whom we search,
our help when help has failed,
give us courage to expose our need
and ask to be made whole;
that, being touched by you,
we may be raised to new life
in the power of your name. Amen.



Ronde au Soleil
(Sun circle) by
Pablo Picasso.

An image of
joyous new
life.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God who is love
and who has given the earth to all people;
We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God, who came to heal us,
and to free us from all forms of oppression;
We believe in the spirit of God
who works in and through all who are turned towards the truth;
We believe in the Church: the community of faith
which is called to worship and serve God
and to be at the service of all people;
We believe in God's power to transform and transfigure,
fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth
where love, justice and peace will flourish. Amen

Intercessions

At Pentecost the minds of the disciples were lit by fire, their tongues released so that all who heard them were amazed. They were empowered by the coming of the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel and to spread it throughout the world. The mission had begun, and we are bidden to continue Christ's work on earth. As we pray now let us keep the faith and ask for a sense of renewal as we move on into this season of Trinity.

God the Father, we are your children, members of that great Christian family which, through many struggles, has survived for over two thousand years. We ask for strength and resilience for members of your church everywhere, and especially for those persecuted for their faith. We praise and thank you for the great gifts of your creation and ask that we find ways of sharing them more equitably. Help us to search for better solutions for those who live in poverty and who lack opportunities. Bless all those who work tirelessly for Christian Aid and all other charitable agencies which seek to close the gaps and bring practical help to those in need.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

God the Son, our brother Jesus, you came to earth to show us how to live, and then suffered and died for our redemption. Teach us your ways of gentleness and grace that may always seek to follow your example. We pray to you for all those who suffer in the field of conflict, both in wars and in domestic abuse. We hold before you the peoples of Ukraine, Syria and Sudan and all those who make tortuous journeys in search of a better life in another country. We pray for those caught up in elemental and man-made disasters and for those who suffer in silence for fear of life becoming even more difficult. Give us the courage to speak out against injustice, to lend a hand or a shoulder to cry on as we bring before you both those known and unknown to us.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Holy Spirit, be with us in dark times bringing your constant light to lift us out of our weakness and our apathy. Stir us into action with your message of hope as we stumble on through life, sometimes forgetting that we can always call on you to cheer and point the way ahead. Give us, we pray, that great gift of humility so that we can work to bring about God's kingdom here on earth; and uphold us at the last that we may join the saints who have gone before us in the heavenly kingdom. We offer these thoughts as we continue to say Holy, Holy, Holy, Blessed Trinity.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Hymn 'Be still for the presence of the Lord...' Words are on the screen.

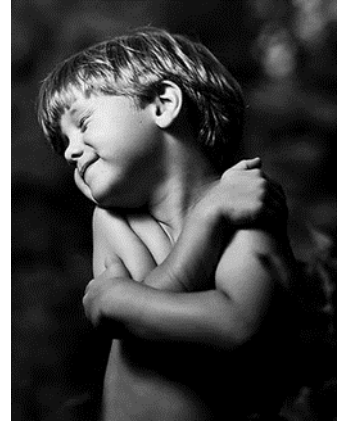
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKfyudrhGK4>

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.



Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to Nigel and St David's Choir singing 'Wait for the Lord.'



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M89oWjtOk&feature=youtu.be>

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Eternal Father, we thank you for nourishing us with these heavenly gifts:
may our communion strengthen us in faith,
build us up in hope and make us grow in love;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

A sending prayer

Created and called to be faithful stewards,
we are sent forth by our God.
We will take all that is good to places of brokenness,
all that is beautiful to those who live in despair.

Called and commissioned to be faithful disciples,
we are sent forth by Jesus, Word of hope.
We follow Jesus to every place he would lead us,
to every person who will bless us.

Called and filled with the very breath of peace,
we are sent forth by the Spirit, God's grace.
We will join the Spirit in bring life where there is fear,
in offering love where hate seeks to take hold.

And now,
may the peace of creation's Imagination,
the peace of grace's Word,
the peace of hope's Spirit,
and the deep, deep peace
of God in Community, Holy in One,
be with us all this day and for always. Amen.

Closing Hymn

'Forth in thy Name O Lord I go.' Words are by Charles Wesley and the tune by Orlando Gibbons. Sung here by Cantus Choro. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUVAbXgJyqQ>

