

Sheffield United Reformed Churches
Team Ministry worship for individuals or a family
Sunday 27th June 2021 at 10:30 am.

Call to worship based on Psalm 130

Wait for the Lord, like those who hope in God's mercy.
God's steadfast love endures forever.
Watch for God, like those who eagerly await the morning.
We watch for God, whose power redeems us.
Hear God's hopeful word, like those who long for freedom.
Sing praise to God and rejoice in God's love.

Opening Hymn R&S 532

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom; your service is song;
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find;
what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart,
your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
your presence to shield me, whatever betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
if I should disown you. I stumble and fall;
but, led in your service your word to obey,
I'll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Prayers of Approach, Thanksgiving and Confession

God of all, as a crowd, as a church, as a family, we come together and reach out today
for your grace and your healing. We pray for your help where we face challenges, and for your
guidance where we have barriers to overcome.

Open our ears to hear your word and draw us closer to you, that the whole world may be one with
you as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of the streets and crowds of the world, we come to you in sorrow and shame
for the times we have allowed prejudice to distance us from those you would draw close to.
We bring to you the times when we have been too proud to ask for help and too distracted to help
others. We acknowledge the times we have been quick to judge those we don't easily identify with,
and ignored those who are here in our City.

We believe that God forgives and sets us free; at the day's beginning we commit ourselves to
following where Christ calls and to loving one another.

God of compassion, you know our faults and yet you promised to forgive. Keep us in your
presence and give us your wisdom.

We thank you for restoring our relationship with you and one another through your forgiveness and
grace. As we accept in thankfulness, may we also reach out across barriers to give and receive, to

restore and to heal, in your name. We pray that your Holy Spirit will rest with us at this time of worship as we seek your healing presence, through the name of Christ... Amen

Readings



2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27 David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan

Psalms 130 A song of ascents.

2 Corinthians 8:7-15 The Collection for the Lord's People

Mark 5:21-43 Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

Reflection

What is your name? Do you have a nickname? Sometimes our name that connects us to our role at work or who we are in our families. I will never forget the joy when my nephew, uttered the words: Aunty Nica! Our names can sometimes give us position and status, and always give us recognition of who we are.

Did you know what most biblical women are nameless? Of the 805 women who appear in the Bible, only 205 women have names. In the cultures in which the Bible was originally written, men held all power politically, economically, and socially and women had limited rights. So, there are 600 biblical women whose names remain a mystery.

This morning, I want to focus on 1 such nameless woman, the one we heard about in Mark's Gospel. She may not have been given a name, but we do get details about her life. This woman has been suffering greatly for twelve years. This woman has tried everything, given everything, spent everything but is not getting any better. At some point she must have been a woman of means, since Mark tells us that "She had spent all she had" in search of a cure. In fact, she in danger of dying, since her medical condition is getting worse.

Indeed, not only is she physically unwell, but according to the Law of the time, she is considered unclean. Being unclean means that she would be considered unfit to worship God, unfit to be with other people. Just think for a moment how that rejection and isolation feels like.

And yet, having lived with all of this for many years, she turns to Jesus. Having tried every cure, she turns to him. When this woman falls down before Jesus, reaches out her hand to take hold of his cloak and tells him the whole truth, the voice she hears is one of understanding, acceptance and healing.

I wonder what whole truth you want to tell Jesus today? What understanding or acceptance or healing do you want to hear from him? Do you have questions? Do you have doubts?

Sometimes faith can be like that – it needs the freedom of questions and doubt to really spring forth and take hold. Otherwise, faith might simply be confused with certainty. But true, vigorous, vibrant faith comes, I think, from the freedom to question, the openness to express wonder, and doubt. Questions and wonder and doubt and even scepticism are signs of interest and curiosity and these, quite often, are the soil in which vibrant faith is born.

When I studied in York, I was part of the university's ecumenical chaplaincy. For some years our chaplains - Catholic, Anglican and Methodist organised a monthly gathering for "searchers, doubters and other good Christians." Instead of a sermon, we had what is called an "open phase", with creative activities in different spaces in the church, encouraging people to take time to think

and ponder, to pray, to discuss. Space to articulate and share doubts, space to discuss together about the journey of faith which leads us in and out of doubt.

In that spirit – let's take a moment to imagine ourselves in that space. And allow ourselves to ask a question. It could be a question about Jesus, about God, about faith. It could be something you have wondered about for years.

Perhaps it will be rather like why did God create midges? (– something I've wondered about!). Maybe it will be something harder – why is there pain and suffering in our lives and our world?

Your words are only for you and God. So, let's take a couple of minutes to ponder.

No matter what the question, God hears it, God listens to it, God makes room for it. God takes you and your question seriously which opens up a space. A space for an authentic encounter with God.

In the story of the nameless woman, there is good news for all of us who have struggled in life, struggled with the whole truth, struggled with questions. This unnamed woman shows us that these thoughts, these experiences of being honest, expressing doubt, asking questions are part of the journey which Christ calls us to make. A journey on which He is always with us.

So, I leave you this week with the hope that we can remember this woman who may have been nameless but who highlights honesty and courage. And as we go out this week, let us allow her example to inspire us to face and listen to our questions and doubts offering them to God who is with each one of us, loving each one of us, every step of the Way. Amen.

Song for reflection

Take, O take me as I am;
Summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart
And live in me.

Prayers for our world

God our creator, maker and healer we come before you and we bring our world, our church and our community. God of compassion we also bring ourselves. Our brothers and sisters in Christ, our God invites us to hold the needs of each other close to our hearts and lift them up to God. Loving our neighbours as ourselves, we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions on behalf of the world and this morning we think of Syria, Sudan, Nigeria, Palestine and Israel,

We give you thanks, Lord, that your healing ministry transcended cultural and social barriers. We pray for a cleansing of all prejudice, and for those whose illness or situation distances them from others. We remember the work of the Leprosy Mission, people struggling with HIV /AIDS

We pray especially for the mentally ill, the homeless, for refugees and all on the fringes of society. May they, and all creation, know your healing and accepting love, and may we all reach out where we can, in your name.

We think about those whom we have lost and those who have suffered loss. (*Lift up the names*) Companion in life and death, your love is steadfast and never ends; our weeping may linger with night, but you give joy in the morning. Touch us with your healing grace that, we will be restored to wholeness, and that we may live out our calling as your resurrection people, who believe in a God who hears and answers prayers. Amen - **We say The Lord's Prayer**

Our Closing Hymn R&S 646

Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us

and Bring us to believe:
we are ourselves accepted
and meant to love and live.

Teach us, O Lord, your lessons,
as in our daily life
we struggle to be human
and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people,
for all - not just for some,
to love them as we find them
or as they may become.

Let your acceptance change us
so that we may be moved
in living situations
to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance
until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness
and laughter's healing art.

Lord, for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for justice and for bread,
we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
Lord, free us, make us one!

Blessing

May God respond to our every cry with love;
May Christ Jesus take us by the hand and lift us to life;
and may the Holy Spirit build us up in faith, hope and love.
And may the blessing of Father, Son and Spirit
Be with us all.
Amen.