

Sunday 16th August 2020 – Alan Darlington

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

“Be Still and Know that I am God.”

Sit back. Breathe deeply. Quieten yourself and listen to the noises around you; birds outside, the fridge humming, cars passing by, the neighbour working outside. Offer these things to God in thanks.

Father, I thank you for all there is in our world, natural and man made. As I come into your presence, I celebrate them and praise you for them. Speak to me through all those things and through your Word today. Amen.

Hymn: And Can it Be (Singing the Faith 345)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29myH7xXI4M>

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour'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, shouldst die for
me?

'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange
design?

In vain the first-born seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
let angel minds enquire no more.

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!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray -

-
I woke, the dungeon flamed with
light,

my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

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 the eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ,
my own.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

Lord, I come before you and
acknowledge that you are King of
Kings and Lord of Lords.

I bow before you and recognise you
as the one who is able to do great
things.

Help me to trust you and listen to
your reply as I call out to you.

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew
15: 21-28

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.

Time to Reflect

The Gospel reading raises a
multitude of questions and this
reflection is not necessarily able to
answer them. Why did Jesus seem
to reject the woman – surely his
message is for all the world? Why
were his disciples apparently so
heartless? Why did Jesus heal some
people and not others? We say that
God always answers our prayers but
why are some prayers for healing
answered with a 'no'? That last one
is surely more pertinent now than
ever.

I admit that I don't know the answer
to those. However, the reaction of
the woman shows us ways that we
can respond when faced with hard
questions and difficult situations.

Firstly, in the midst of her trouble and desperation, she recognised who Jesus was and that she should turn to him. She recognised him as someone special, as the one with the power to help her.

Secondly, she reacted with boldness. She was not put off by approaching a stranger, by approaching a man or by approaching a foreigner – none of which would have been easy for a woman of her time to do. Her boldness continued as she pressed the matter and argued her case. She was not put off by Jesus's silence or the disciples' irritation.

Finally, she approached with faith – and that is her claim to fame. She argued her case. Her boldness and her faith go hand-in-hand. Her request was not a “well, Lord, if you might, possibly ...” She trusted that Jesus was the one to help her and wouldn't take no for an answer.

Are we like that woman? When we approach Jesus, do we truly recognise who he is – the Lord of Lords but the Saviour who can meet our deepest needs?

Do we approach with faith, clearly asking, or do we provide God with get-out clauses: “Please heal my friend – or at least make him not quite as bad?”

Do we approach with boldness?

And, when we don't get the answer we want, does our faith allow us to answer back? God's back is strong enough to take it if we shout and rail back at him – as long as our faith then allows us to respond to his answer.

A time of prayer

Re-read the last verse of the hymn.
Take a time to sit quietly

“Bold I approach the eternal throne ...”
I approach your throne for the people I know personally that need a special touch from you. I picture them as I place them into your loving hands.

I approach your throne for the people who are shouting out with questions and despair and don't know where to turn. Be their comfort Lord.

I approach your throne for those far from me and give to you their needs, knowing that I can trust you to respond.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Faithful One (Singing the Faith 628)

Sing or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PjSO5IhI0M>

Faithful One, so unchanging,

Ageless One, you're my rock of
peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is
the anchor,
my hope is in you alone.

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

A prayer of blessing

In the joys, may I celebrate with you
Lord.
In the troubles, may I shout out to
you with boldness and listen to you
in faith.
And in the everyday, may I journey
on with you.

Original Materials by Alan
Darlington

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