

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost August 16, 2020 Church of the Ascension, Ottawa

Hymn – *Tell Out My Soul*

[Sing along with the Ely Cathedral Choir](#)

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!
Make known his might,
the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age to same;
his holy Name – the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Opening Prayers & Penitential Rite

God is with us

O come, let us worship!

Although we have come together in digital space, we each stand in place on solid ground that is the ancestral territory of peoples who were here long before the Europeans crossed the ocean. I live in the City of Ottawa which is located on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. On whose territory do you live?

Silence

Let us pray,

**Loving God,
help us to live respectfully on these lands,
seeking justice and peace.
Help us to pray to you in faith,
to sing to you with gratitude,
and to listen to your word with eagerness;
so that we might follow Christ our Lord. Amen.**

God knows the innermost workings of our hearts and God's love does not fail.
Confident, therefore, in God's faithfulness, let us confess our own sins and those of our broken world.

Silence

**We need your healing, merciful God:
give us true repentance.
Some sins are plain to us;
some escape us,
some we cannot face.
Forgive us;
set us free to hear your word to us;
set us free to serve you.**

God brings new life for all.
You are forgiven.
Take hold of this forgiveness and live your life
in the Spirit of Jesus Christ to bring God's healing to the world. **Amen.**

Gloria

Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest!
Glory to God, glory to God, alleluia, alleluia!

First Reading – Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.
Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 67

O God, be merciful to us and bless us,
show us the light of your countenance and come to us.
Let your ways be known upon earth,
your saving health among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
The earth has brought forth its increase; may you, O God our God, bless us.
May you bless us, and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe of you.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, Alleluia! Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel Reading – Matthew 15:21-28

God is here.

The Spirit is with us.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

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.

The Gospel of Christ

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Sermon – *the Rev'd Adam Brown*

"But he did not answer her at all." Are some of the toughest words to hear at any time, let alone in a reading from the Gospels; the Good News. The idea that Christ, the Son of God, who had just spent an evening feeding five thousand people in a deserted place, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, drawing thousands of people to him from all across the countryside, walking across water, and calling out authority figures for their unjust, oftentimes hypocritical, and unsound expectations, wouldn't even answer the desperate woman right in front of him is something that, rightfully, doesn't sit easily with us. It makes us feel awful; embarrassed even, and we don't really know what to do with it.

unconditional love and care. We always talk about having mercy and love and care for others, and that's true, but we can't forget ourselves in that, either. There are those moments where, in those times of loneliness or distress you go to, or at least really want to be with, those whom you know for certain can protect you and look after you, your Lord, the one whom everybody knows and trusts in, that "son of David."

There are definitely a few of my own memories that come to me as I read this story, but one in particular stands out amongst the rest. A few years ago I was in this relatively small parish, in a poor, but gentrifying neighbourhood in downtown Toronto. I was their latest student doing a placement there and I'd actually just started seminary. One day I was puttering around, cleaning this and that, getting ready for whatever was coming next, and this man comes in off the street, goes up to the steps of the altar and just starts screaming! Nobody else's around, just the priest and me. I was, well, beyond shocked, and had NO idea what to do as this man just yelled into the altar about all the bad things in his life. After I snapped back into reality, I turned to the priest, who wasn't phased by this at all, and I asked them, "hey! ...uhhh... shouldn't we do something about this?" And the priest's response was simply, "don't worry, I know him, and he's safe. I think God can handle being screamed at."

Looking back I realized that I had unknowingly been one of those disciples urging Jesus to, "send her away, for she keeps shouting at us." There was no answer back from the space above the altar in that moment, no booming voice from God, no intervention by the familiar priest, no unintended argument with the know-it-all student. There was simply a holy and safe space where an understandable anger and desperation could be expressed in a very raw and emotional and vulnerable and human way.

And what I find so interesting about what the Canaanite mother's saying, is that she's not even asked to be cured herself – there's nothing really wrong with *her* – she's asking on behalf of her daughter. And of course we can point to countless times that's happened in the Gospels alone, but she's special in the sense that we can learn a lot about *how* she's asking.

She runs up to Jesus and says, "Lord have mercy upon *me*." She has so much empathy for her daughter, can feel her pain as if it were her own, that she carries that pain to Christ Himself. A few people over the past few weeks have been asking me what intercessory prayer was, what it really meant to pray for someone else, and it is this moment that shows us what we are called to do. Not to lose ourselves in someone else's pain, definitely not to violate helpful and healthy boundaries, but to let ourselves empathize with those who are in pain, those who are on the margins, those who are pushed aside; to identify and get rid of anything that builds up the "us vs them"; to identify and get rid of anything that destroys, chips away at, or even clouds our sense of empathy, especially ignorance and thinking we know better than those victims in our society.

But what does Jesus say? The disciples pressure Jesus to simply send her away; she's a Canaanite, the traditional enemy of Israel, associated with worshipping all sorts of idols and fake gods; she's from Tyre and Sidon, known for their luxurious lifestyles. He said to them, knowingly, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And following his familiar voice the mother, stigmatized and marked as an untouchable outsider by the disciples, lost to the world beyond all hope, came to Christ, the shepherd of the lost sheep, and knelt there before him, saying again, "Lord, help me."

Christ says to the mother, disciples in earshot listening in, "You know, it is not fair to take the *children's* food and throw it before (unclean) *dogs*." And as if to finish his sentence, she answered back, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

And it was at that moment that Christ gave space to the woman in her distress and allowed her to speak the truth in her own words, filled with empathy and love. It is at that moment that the mother, an untouchable Canaanite, enemy of Israel, living in a place of wealth and excess, preached *back* at the disciples wanting to send her away, proclaiming that the Realm of God breaking into the world was *not* limited to just a few, but would be accessible to all, even those deemed by society to be "mere" "dogs". Filled with pride and hope, I can imagine Christ beaming as he says, "Woman, great is your faith!" (especially since he called Peter "you of little faith" back at the walking on the water!)

The Good News this morning is that we have a sacred call to recognize when we *ourselves* have become the scandalized disciples of little faith, wanting to hide or get rid of people who are scared, or alone, or desperate; to silence those who simply need to cry out to God in anger, or grief, or even joy; and to instead become more like the Canaanite mother, carrying all that we are, all the mess and chaos of our lives, filled with a radical, transformative, love and care for others, to Christ, to the God who, himself, carries *our own* mess and chaos and pain and sorrow and isolation to the cross, where he cried out for and proclaimed mercy, unconditional love, for all people, in all times, in all places, forever... and *in that* we are healed. We are brought to new life. We are made whole. Thanks be to God.

Hymn – The King of Love my Shepherd Is

[Join the Ars Nova Vocal Group](#)

The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spreads't a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never;
good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house forever!

Affirmation of Faith

Together, let us affirm our faith as we say:

Hear, O Israel

the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God

with all your heart,

with all your soul,

with all your mind,

and with all your strength.

This is the first and the great commandment.

The second is like it:

Love your neighbour as yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these.

Prayers of the People

Offer your prayers for the world, for those you know are in need of God's care, for the church, and for yourself

Collect

God of the nations,
all are invited to your table,
for in your family no one is a stranger. Satisfy our hunger
and mercifully extend to all people
the joy of salvation and faith.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray as our Saviour taught us,

**Our Mother, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Closing Prayers

Blessed be God who calls us together and makes us one.

Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin and gives us hope and freedom.

Blessed be God whose Word is proclaimed and is revealed to be Love.

Blessed be God who alone has called us.

Therefore we offer all that we are and all that we shall become.

Glory to God

whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

**Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

May the peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of God's Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And the blessing of the Holy Trinity, the Source of all being, the Eternal Word, and the Holy Spirit be upon you this day and forevermore. Amen.

Hymn – Jesus Put this Song into our Hearts

[Sing along with Ascension's own Aude Urbancic](#)

Jesus put this song into our hearts

Jesus put this song into our hearts
It's a song of joy no one can take away
Jesus put this song into our hearts

Jesus taught us how to live in harmony
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony
Different faces, different races, he made us one
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony

Jesus taught us how to be a family
Jesus taught us how to be a family
Loving one another with the love that he gives
Jesus taught us how to be a family

Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing
Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing
Changed our tears of sadness into rivers of joy
Jesus turned our sorrow into a dance

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

This service is assembled from resources found in the Book of Alternative Services, published by the Anglican Church of Canada; New Patterns for Worship, published by the Church of England; and A New Zealand Prayer Book, published by the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

The Psalm is drawn from the Inclusive Language Psalter, commended for use by the Council of General Synod, March 2019 and found online at <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/GS2016-Liturgical-Psalter-2016-05-04.pdf>

Biblical texts are from the New Revised Standard Version

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Additional material is written by the Rev'd Rhonda Waters