

Morning Prayer 27th June 2021

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Worship with Revd. Peter Widdess



Personal preparation before the service begins.

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Please take time to remember wherever you are, we
are all in the presence of God as one community.
Give thanks and become still in the presence of God

Music before the service

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you.
And also with you.

Song

Come as you are, that's how I want you.
Come as you are, feel quite at home.
Close to my heart, loved and forgiven;
come as you are, why stand alone?

No need to fear, love sets no limits.
No need to fear, love never ends.
Don't run away, shamed and disheartened.
Rest in my love, trust me again.

I came to call sinners, not just the virtuous.
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail to live by my promise,
why do you think I'd love you the less?

Come as you are, that's how I love you.
Come as you are, trust me again.
Nothing can change the love that I bear you.
All will be well, just come as you are.

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Deirdre Browne
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Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.

**Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.**

If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

**But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.**

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

**I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.**

Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

**He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy
Spirit,

**As it was, now and ever shall be, world without
end.**

Amen

The collect for the fifth Sunday after Pentecost

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may so pass through things temporal
that we lose not our hold on things eternal.

grant this, heavenly father,
for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

**The reading is taken from the second letter of Paul
to the Corinthians chapter 8.**

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God.
Our hearts and our minds are open.

Since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

**Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to Mark.
Glory to you, O Lord**

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the

home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep."

But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this and told them to give her something to eat.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

For many years my wife and I have been supporting the work of the Fistula Hospital in Addis Abeba. It was founded in the early 1970's by the Australian couple, Reg and Catherine Hamlin, both specialists in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. They were members of the church choir of St Matthew's Anglican church in Addis in which I also sang. The hospital has become a worldwide center for women suffering under fistula from the birth of their children. The wall of the womb to the after is torn. Excrement and blood leave uncontrollably the body of the women through the womb. More often than not the babies are born dead and thus cause the rip in the womb.

The women smell and are regarded by society as unclean, thrown out of their homes, they live on the edges of society with no support. They are treated like the excrement which they can no longer control in their own bodies. This was and is normal in societies where there are few trained Midwives or Obstetricians, which is why birth fistula are virtually unknown here, but are the scourge of various countries in Africa or Asia, especially where the age of marriage is very low. (In the 1970's there were five gynaecologists working in

Ethiopia, four of whom sang in the Anglican church choir.) Catherine Hamlin, who died last year aged 96, developed operative techniques to repair torn wombs and training programmes to help the women to regain a place in society after many years of isolation and exclusion.

I was reminded of Catherine Hamlin and her pioneering work with fistula when I read today's gospel. I wondered whether the woman subjected to bleeding for 12 years may be suffering under the consequences of a birth fistula. The commentaries on the gospel which I consulted knew nothing about fistula and so are of the scholarly medical opinion that she was bleeding for other reasons. The list of possible illnesses is long. Is this a case of only being able to diagnose or recognise what you know or deal with on a regular basis? My suspicion about fistula being the reason for the woman's bleeding increased as I realised that the other woman healed in the story is a lass on the threshold of adulthood. Puberty, the beginnings of regular menstruation, the possibility of marriage and becoming a mother in very few years time, these are very critical moments. At the time to be a child was regarded as an illness. With the physical adulthood the child becomes a person. So there is a parallel between the 12 years illness of the woman and the 12 years of the lass becoming an adult. Her father speaks of her to Jesus as his little daughter, though well aware that she is practically an adult. We fathers do love our daughters and are so amazed that they too can become mothers! I did wonder whether the two times 12 years was also a symbol for Israel, the 12 tribes of Israel, but on consideration I don't think that this is relevant here for my understanding of the homily today. What is more relevant is to look at the many healing stories in Mark's gospel. Most of the healings which Mark relates are of men, only four are of women: the mother-in-law of Peter, the Syrophenician woman's daughter and our two ladies in today's gospel. Mark is said to have got most of his information for the gospel from Peter, which might explain the mother-in-law. The Syrophenician woman is quick witted enough to get Jesus to say that his mission is not only to the people of Israel, so her

story was very significant for the mission of the young church. Today's story is the longest healing story in the gospel, with the most details and bits of information. In comparison men get healed relatively quickly.

So what is Mark asking us to hear and understand?

I suggest three themes worth looking at today.

First: the contrast between the bleeding woman and Jairus, the father.

The woman has been ill many years, has lost her money in useless treatments, and lost her self-consciousness and self confidence. She cannot trust herself to address Jesus directly. She cannot believe that he will want to have anything to do with her. From her position at the edge of society her only thought is to be able to touch him – thus the approach from behind. Jairus is a leading light of society who would normally have had nothing to do with Jesus, this itinerant preacher and healer. It is unusual that Jairus is named, a name meaning “enlightened” or “woken”. But Jairus is desperate. His daughter, for whatever reason, is dying. So, disregarding all questions about class, status or importance, he goes directly to Jesus. He not only asks for help. He falls at the feet of Jesus and pleads for help. We are not told what the other leading lights of society thought about this, though we do get a hint later.

Two people at diametrically opposite ends of society see in Jesus their only hope for life and healing. Jesus makes no distinction between the person at the top or bottom of society. He is concerned equally with both. Which brings me to the second theme which we should notice – the reaction of the disciples and those looking on. Earlier in the gospel we can read that Jesus has told the disciples that they are his inner circle of friends. They get the benefit not only of the public teaching and parables of Jesus but also of explanations and further details in private. But this doesn't mean that they know or understand everything about Jesus. He sometimes gets annoyed with them for their lack of understanding. They still have much to learn. In this moment when Jesus realises that someone has touched him seeking health and healing, this is for him a very real experience which the disciples cannot see. They sense the urgency of this big man, this important person

Jairus, and cannot accept that Jesus suddenly stops and looks for someone else in the crowd of people. But then people come from the house of Jairus and tell him of the death of his daughter. You don't need this Jesus anymore, they say – is this what the other leading lights of society thought about Jairus seeking help from Jesus? But Jesus overhears them. He continues on his way to the house where the healing or wakening of the daughter takes place.

The disciples only see the important person Jairus, and the people from his circle also only see their leader. The needs of the woman and the child on the threshold of being a woman are ignored by both groups.

Jesus however treats all three, the woman, the lass and her father equally. No one is more or less important than the others. Here there is a link to the first reading: in the latter part of his mission in Greece and Asia Minor Paul hears of the difficult situation and poverty of the group of followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. He organises a collection amongst the Christian communities in Greece to aid those in Jerusalem. In today's first reading Paul praises the generosity of the Corinthians. He underlines that a deeper point of the collection is an understanding of equality and reciprocity, that those who help me at this moment may need my help on another occasion.

So now the final theme in today's gospel which we need to address – gender equality. Leaving aside Peter's mother-in-law, the story of the healing of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter and the two ladies in today's gospel are important markers for Mark's understanding of the future church. Mark is saying the church is international, open for people of all races or nationalities, and in today's gospel he is underlining the theme of gender equality in the church and society.

Jesus gives his full attention to those people who society regards as less important – women. In this case a woman who is useless, an outcast and unclean through her illness, which a man cannot have, and the child almost woman who has no relevance except as the object of love of her parents.

One of the features of the ACF are the competent women assembled here who are well able to speak about the difficulties and joys of gender equality in the

church and society in general. You do not need me to speak for you. So, I close the homily with a quote from the Ghanaian Professor of Theology, Mercy Amba Oduyoye writing about African women's understanding of Christ:

Christ is the liberator from the burden of disease and the ostracism of a society riddled with blood taboos and theories of inauspiciousness arising out of women's blood. Christ liberated women...demanding that the woman bent double with gynaecological disorders should stand up straight. The practice of making women become silent beasts of societies' burdens, bent double under racism, poverty and the lack of appreciation of what fulness of womanhood should be, has been annulled and countered by Christ. Christ transcends and transforms culture and has liberated us to do the same.

Amen

Footnotes to the homily

<https://hamlinfistula.org/> for further information about the Fistula Hospital and the Hamlins

Another important institution in this regard is the "Fistula Verein in Bruchsal" of which Gerhild and Peter Widdess are members.

Here is the link:

<https://www.fistula.de/fistula.html>

The work which Dr Hamlin started has through training programmes for gynaecologists begun to spread world wide. The Verein in Bruchsal supports not only the hospital in Addis but also a programme in Uganda. (One gets a spendenbescheinigung from the verein in Bruchsal!)

The quote from Oduyoye is to be found in her essay "Jesus Christ" page 162 in "The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology" Edited by Susan Frank Parsons CUP 2002 ISBN 0 521 66380 6)

Song

Beauty for brokenness,
Hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering,
This is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
Justice, joy, peace,
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives,
Cures for their ills,
Work for the craftsmen,
Trade for their skills.
Land for the dispossessed,
Rights for the weak,
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor,
Friend of the weak,
Give us compassion, we pray;
Melt our cold hearts,
Let tears fall like rain.
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame.*

Lighten our darkness,
Breathe on this flame,
Until your justice
Burns brightly again;
Until the nations
Learn of your ways,
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise.

*God of the poor,
Friend of the weak,
Give us compassion, we pray;
Melt our cold hearts,
Let tears fall like rain.
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame.*

Intercessions (by Judith)

Loving Lord, you created us in love and you gave us your Son that we should not perish, but have everlasting life. Help us to cast aside prejudice and love one another as individuals you have created in your own image.

Lord we come to you

You can make us whole

Teacher, we pray for all those who proclaim your word. We pray particularly for our newly appointed minister and his family, who are willing to join us sooner rather than later, but because of Covid restrictions are unable to do so. We pray for those leading services each week, writing meditations, leading meetings and groups in the absence of our minister. We ask for guidance, strength and wisdom when tasks become too much for us to master, when our leadership fails, when we are insecure, when we are divided as to our future. We pray that you will guide us, give us wisdom, make us patient, insightful, just, forgiving and whole.

Lord we come to you

You can make us whole

Comforter and Challenger, we pray for the people of Würzburg, coming to grips with the horrendous events of Saturday - for the dead and the maimed. Lord we pray for the worldwide situation of refugees and displaced persons who are driven to leave their home countries, families, friends and loved ones, whether this be for environmental, political, economical or other reasons. They leave behind a familiar culture and hear a language they cannot understand and discover a culture that can seem unintelligible. We struggle to understand the background and psychological problems some refugees or displaced persons suffer from more seriously than others. We struggle to understand how some people have so little regard for

another life that they kill randomly. We are gob smacked by the consequences. Help us to explore, try to understand and seek solutions.

We ask for your comfort for the loved ones of those victims in Würzburg who were killed or injured.

Lord we come to you

You can make us whole

Loving Jesus, we pray for those who are rejected and feared by others, because they are different.

We pray for the physically and mentally handicapped, the LGBTs. We are humans loved by you, all equal in your sight, yet we know there are those who feel unloved and struggle to be accepted by society. We pray for the down-hearted, broken-hearted, broken-spirited, despairing, suicidal members of our society. We pray for the sick and needy. We pray particularly for Margaret who will be operated on on Tuesday. We pray for others in our community who we know are struggling – for Brian, Bev, Almut, Dieter, for their loved ones, their families and their friends We bring them before you and ask for healing and relief from their suffering and strength to face each new challenge. We take time to place others known to us personally before your cross and ask for your healing and compassion.

Lord we come to you

You can make us whole

Gracious God, grant us a vision of your world as you would have it: a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor; where the world and its biodiversity is respected and loved... a world where peace is built on dignity, justice and equality, but above all guided by and built on love and acceptance. Give us the inspiration, courage and resolve to help heal and restore the world you created, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord's prayer



Evening Prayer on Wednesdays

Wednesday, 30th June 2021
9pm (for 20-30min)

(Please use the usual
Sunday service link.)



Women's Prayer Group

July 1, 2021
at 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm

via zoom (Please get in
touch to receive the link.)

Song

Lord of all hopefulness,
Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like,
No cares could destroy,
Be there at our waking,
And give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord,
At the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled
At the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours,
And give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord,
At the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome,
Your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing,
And give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord,
At the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment,
Whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping,
And give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord,
At the end of the day.

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Jan Struther

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