

Dorset South & West.

Sunday 30th June 2024.

Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.

Written Service.

Dignity.



Call to Worship Psalm 30: 4

Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name.

STF 345

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood? L
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.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession .

Heavenly Father, as we gather in your presence today with open hearts and minds, ready to worship and praise your holy name. We ask that you will bless this time of worship so that we may be uplifted and inspired by your presence. Fill us with your love and grace, and help us to honour you in all that we do. May our worship be pleasing to you, and may we be transformed by the power of your Spirit. **Amen**

God of mercy, we admit that sometimes we don't know what to do with ourselves. We get angry at the slightest insult and imagine great vengeance upon those who have wronged us. We stay silent when we should speak for what is right. We hold back from doing good and are too quick to put ourselves first. We care for ourselves but not for others, in the same way. Forgive us, we pray and help us to amend what we are. **Amen.**

Gospel Reading: Mark 5:21-43.

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 realised 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.

ReflectionDignity.

What would you say is the most valuable thing that gives you dignity? That might be a hard question to answer and certainly a difficult question to give a simple or single answer to. Perhaps it's easier to come at an answer from a different perspective and to ask what robs us of our dignity? Even that is a loaded question, because it implies that we have rights to dignity.

In fact everyone has rights to their dignity. In 1998 The human rights act incorporated the European Convention of Human Rights into UK law. That briefly means, everyone has a right to be treated with, Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity, and Respect for their Personal Autonomy.

In our Bible reading today we have a vivid picture of two different sets of people with desperate needs but we also have a plethora of other people who all have needs. Firstly we have a grieving father and no doubt a grief stricken family. They represent the needs of their sick child. Jairus is an important man in the community, a Synagogue leader. I guess not without status and means. At the other end we have the woman in the crowd. Not even given the dignity of being named. Sickness has degraded her, she is alone, penniless and desperate.

Have you noticed the difference between their two requests? Jairus begs for Jesus' whole attention, "come to my house.."

Whereas the woman only hopes to just touch the hem of Jesus' garment. One demands everything and the other just a scrap. One is a pillar of the community, the other is an outcast of the community.

Now it would not be correct to ask who was right? Whose need was more important and who had the right to be heard first and receive action. It's not a question to put. Rather do you see how everyone, no matter who they are they are, is given dignity and respect. They all have inestimable rights in God's presence.

I said that there was a plethora of people present, who are they? The crowd. Such an umbrella word that keeps us from seeing the people and who they really are. Yet we are told that, 'the crowd pressed around him'. Why? What makes it so urgent that they have to get up so close to Jesus?

People in a crowd even today, can seem to be invisible, unimportant, faceless. Do you recall the song by Ralph Mctell 'Streets of London,' recorded in 1969? The words/questions are still pertinent to today. "Have you seen...?"

The song speaks of homeless People.

Lonely people and a veteran whose memory is fading,
one more forgotten hero

And a world that doesn't care.

It is so easy to use 'umbrella' descriptions that only pay a dismissive disservice to those who we refer to in such a general manner. The homeless, the elderly, the lonely, the asylum seekers....and so we can go on. However if we have really seen these individuals and engaged in their stories and heard their needs, then our perspective as a community will change.

I recently read a book about a week in the life of an NHS worker. What was sad but amusing was when some people didn't get their own way and immediate attention, they threatened to take it to their MP! I pity the workloads of our MP's if a majority of their work is trying to resolve such temper tantrum issues.

This passage in Marks gospel has been described as a 'sandwich story'. Jairus' request interrupted by the unnamed woman. Its interesting that she doesn't want to touch Jesus' body, just an inconsequential part of his clothing, the hemline. The piece that is the least of his clothing and no doubt dragged through the dust and debris of the road. Was she feeling that her status was so low that that's all she could expect to touch? Yet the thing that unites these two individuals is their utter faith in Jesus' healing power. The fact that He would care for them and grant their requests.

When you look at the contrast of how they are both treated it's interesting. The woman is raised up no doubt by Jesus' words and I like to think that he would have lifted her up from the ground, the scripture says she threw herself at his feet. I think he would have taken her hand just as he did with the little girl.

Now Jairus is not seemingly standing on his position in society, otherwise he would have sent messengers on his behalf to summon Jesus. However he is made to wait! Can you imagine a similar scenario today? Let us imagine that a homeless person and a prospective MP come to church and both are seeking prayer. Can you imagine how people might feel if the homeless person is dealt with first? It's no wonder that the disciples are indignant about Jesus' questions about who touched him. They no doubt felt the urgency of going to this important official's home and healing his child. The words of the disciple's are interesting too, "You see the

people crowding against you,” . I wonder what they mean by “against you”? Could it be about who he healed first, who he gave his attention to first? The important synagogue leader or the other one? As we approach the general election there will be many similarities. Why is this party or candidate bothering with this particular issue or group of individuals? Impossible situation’s and decisions to make. The rights of all people and their dignity are to be upheld, but a daunting task to test the limits of anyone.

There’s one person who is overlooked in our Bible story. That individuals needs and rights have been overlooked. Can you identify that person?

He is the one who has people demanding that their needs should be met first, who is laughed at, doubted and disbelieved. What an uncomfortable situation to be in when the crowd is pressing in on you. What is it like to give and give and never to be met with gratitude, just criticism? Gods own son and yet treated so often without dignity and not even considered to have any rights.

We are on the edge of our next general election and I pity whoever is to become the next Prime Minister. On Election Night they will be heroes, the best hope for the nation. But in no time at all the tables will turn and every conceivable fault and failing will be thrown against them. Where is our respect for their human dignity and their rights?

One wonders if God will be looking down on the hecklers and saying “Why all this commotion and wailing?” In an election as in life and as in the crowd in our bible story. There are always those who will be the silent majority, the ones who ‘vote with their feet.’ I wonder if Jesus could have had a little order in this scenario and the time to ask everyone in an orderly manner, “what do you need”? “What would give you your dignity?” What answers would be heard and how many would reflect the same situation’s of life today.

The unnamed woman is so important here, because she doesn’t even get to verbalise her need and yet she’s made whole.

Life teaches us that we can’t all have exactly what we want, that is impossible. Like a group of children who all expect to get to be first. ‘Acting more like children than children,’ to quote another song. Life and the gospel teaches us that we must strive for an equal share for all people.

Do you notice that the child who has been sick is described by Jesus as just sleeping and is instructed to get up and eat. The grieving parents are to find food for her. The child who has been sick to the point of death is immediately walking about. How many situations do we find ourselves in but not fully awake? If nothing else election debates are an opportunity to become more aware and awake to the needs of our nation.

What happens in the gospel story is not quite our experience of sickness or of the grieving process. The recovery from both desperate circumstances is often a slow process, that takes various stages and lots of support. We don’t immediately get up from these times and get active.

How often have we said, “I am sick to death with this!” Has that anger or despair actually caused us to get up and do something positive about it? I guess in many cases we are like the children of Israel who in captivity and exile, sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion! The melancholy of memories of things past, that time may have gilded, resolves very little. There’s an appropriate time for recovery but also a need to get up, be active and feed ourselves; physically, mentally and spiritually so we have the energy to move forward in the things that we can do to make our world a better place.

What should we make of all this as we approach the general election? What would Jesus do? “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesars”. At the very least we can seek to love, pray and vote. To try to widen our vision and to support those who offer themselves in the service of others, especially in government. To seek to love and pray for all people and to use our resources to the fullest of our ability to help make the world a place of dignity and respect for all people.

Hymn

The following hymn written by Andrew Pratt works well when sung to the tune: Scarlet Ribbons.

If we claim to love our neighbour
while the hungry queue for food,
are we prey to self deception?
Is perception quite so crude?

If we sit beside our neighbours,
begging for the things they need,
we might share their own injustice
in a world that thrives on greed.

If we punish those with nothing,
blaming them for where they stand,
is this love of friend or neighbour,
do we still not understand?

Love of neighbour is not easy,
cuts us till we feel the pain,
sharing hurt that they are feeling
till they find new life again.

Love of neighbour sets us squarely
in the place where they now sit,
till the richness God has given
builds a pearl around the grit;
till each person shares the comfort
of the love of which we preach,
till we live as fact the Gospel:
none can be beyond love's reach.

Prayers of Intercession.

Let us pray for the world and all its leaders: we especially pray for those in the news today.
May leaders of nations have the courage to walk the path of peace together
so that the most vulnerable in their lands may live with dignity and hope.

Let us pray for our nation in this time of discernment, election, and transition.
May all people cast their vote in a spirit of reverence for the rights of the greater good,
May all show charity for those they disagree with, and concern for the good of all
as we strive for the best outcomes for our nation.

Let us pray for all candidates who desire to serve in our national and local government.
May all seeking election, commit themselves to the common good
and encourage a peaceful response
so that our nation may be faithful to its values for justice for all.

Let us pray for the ones most affected by the choices we make
We pray for those who are facing poverty, refugees and asylum seekers,
We pray for those who are sick.
For those without homes and those without food or meaningful work,

A prayer for voters
Loving God, we face a choice.
Be with us as we consider the options
Weigh the arguments
And assess the claims and the candidates
But also prompt us to listen:
To the voices of the margins
To the cry of the earth
And to those who reach a different conclusion to us.
God we pray that you will stimulate our minds stir our hearts and sanctify our choosing.
Help us also to remember your command to love our neighbours both during and after this election. **Amen.**

We say the Lord's Prayer

STF 705

It is God who holds the nations
in the hollow of his hand;
it is God whose light is shining
in the darkness of the land;
it is God who builds the City
on the Rock and not on sand:
may the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us
to use the present hour;
who recalls us to our senses
when a nation's life turns sour;
in the discipline of freedom
we shall know God's saving power:
may the living God be praised!

When a thankful nation, looking back,
has cause to celebrate
those who win our admiration
by their service to the state;
when self-giving is a measure
of the greatness of the great:
may the living God be praised!

God reminds us every sunrise
that the world is ours on lease:
for the sake of life tomorrow
may our love for it increase;
may all races live together,
share its riches, be at peace:
may the living God be praised!

The Blessing.

Let us go forth into the world in peace;
To be of good courage;
To hold fast to that which is good;
To render to no one evil for evil;
To strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

