

Facebook Live Worship Outline

Pentecost 11 - 16 August 2020

GATHERING

GATHERING HYMN EVLW #641 *All Are Welcome*

1. Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

Refrain

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome
in this place.*

2. Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: *{Refrain}*
3. Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God in Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us: *{Refrain}*
4. Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strength, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger: *{Refrain}*
5. Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: *{Refrain}*

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GREETING

- P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- C: **And also with you.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: God has forgiven us and drawn us close, reconciling us through Jesus Christ
C: **who has lavished upon us the fullness of the blessed Holy Spirit.**

All: With glad and grateful hearts, let us praise the Lord!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray. Lord Jesus, Son of God, your blessings know no boundaries that faith cannot cross. Strengthen us to trust in your mercy, reach out for your healing, and receive your reconciliation.
C: **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING

Moved to tears by Judah's plea on behalf of Benjamin, Joseph declares, "I am Joseph!" and asks, "Is my father still alive?" Despite the brother's evil intent, God used Joseph to preserve many lives at a time of famine. Reading from the Book of Genesis in the 45th chapter:

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there--since there are five more years of famine to come--so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty. And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father how greatly I am honoured in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.'" Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Genesis 45:1-15

Holy Wisdom, Holy Words. **Thanks be to God**

GOSPEL

Jesus teaches his disciples that true purity is a matter of the heart rather than outward religious observances. Almost immediately, this teaching is tested when a woman considered to be a religious outsider approaches him for help. This is the Holy Gospel according to Matthew:

Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

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.

Matthew 15: 10-28

P: The Gospel of the Lord

SERMON



SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2020

REV. CHRISTIE MORROW

ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP— PUBLIC POLICY & SERVICE, STEWARDSHIP, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT

EASTERN SYNOD

MATTHEW 15:21-28

I totally feel where the Canaanite woman is coming from. Oh do I feel her anguish and desperation. Any of us who are parents; grandparents; aunts; uncles; friends or who otherwise have children in our lives whom we love deeply, can probably relate to this mother on some level. Her daughter is sick. She will move mountains, transverse long-held boundaries, cross lines, take risks, put herself on the line ... she will do whatever it takes to make her plight known and to get help for her child. I totally get and relate to the Mama-bear in her.

What I don't get ... what pains my heart ... what gives me a whole, healthy dose of internal wrestling, is Jesus' response to her. Over the years, various theologians and commentators and authors have made every effort to try and explain away first his lack of response – he literally ignores her – and then his eventual spelling out that in no uncertain terms is his ministry meant for her ... that her status is akin to that of a dog. A foreign, unworthy, enemy dog.

To try and soften the blow of his words, some have explained that the literal translation of the Greek word “dog” in this case, is actually ‘puppy,’ as if this is somehow better ... when in all actuality, it still leaves her under the table, eating the crumbs off the floor.^{1 2} And if we're honest, Jesus' eventual response to her is difficult to hear and explain away and not at all reflective of the Jesus that I want tucked close to me.

The truth is, we may never understand what prompted Jesus to say what he did. He and his disciples had wandered into Canaanite territory – the land of a traditional enemy. THEY are the ones that had crossed the line between Jew and Gentile ... one would think they would have EXPECTED to bump up against others who practiced a different faith ... who believed different things. So Jesus, why oh why did you have to go there and say that to this woman who more than anything needed your compassion and care?

There are all kinds of lines being crossed in this story. Jesus is a Jew in Gentile territory; he is deemed ‘clean,’ she ‘unclean; the woman is speaking to a man – emphasizing a gender divide; and she is speaking to someone who ranked higher socially than she did ... Jesus was a rabbi ... someone who had studied and learned. But it would appear as though his learning wasn't over. In his book entitled *A Way Other than Our Own*, Walter Brueggemann puts forth the idea that we are watching Jesus wrestle with his own vocation and the very extent to which he is being called to cross lines in order to help the other. Brueggemann writes:

the woman is the outsider who instructs the insider. She explains to Jesus his larger vocation that he had not yet embraced ... he learns that full faithfulness means reaching

¹ Carla Works, “Commentary on Matthew 15:[10-20] 21-28,” Working Preacher – August 14, 2017, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2145, accessed on June 25, 2020.

² Barbara Kay Lundblad, “Matthew 15:21-28: Teaching Jesus,” Huffington Post – August 9, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/on-scripture-matthew-15-teaching-jesus_b_921497, accessed on June 25, 2020.

beyond one's comfort zone to the other. He now, in a new way, enacts the gathering of humanity.³

But what a road to travel to get to this point. Holding a line against another ... being in a position of power and privilege without being totally aware that that's where you're operating from ... being called out; asked to reconsider ... to come to know more in order to do better ... does this sound at all familiar? It should in this day and age.

It was a happy time back in the early 1990s. A family had gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its matriarch and patriarch. There were several activities planned in the weekend long festivity ... teas, dinners, a mock wedding, a square dance even ... and family pictures. The ENTIRE family had gathered together to celebrate and since they didn't all gather in their entirety very often, you can imagine the boisterous noise of teasing and kibitzing going on. Arranging people for a portrait in this case was probably akin to trying to herd cats. But in arranging the family, the photographer chose to position people along the theme of light and dark ... both clothes and skin. A number of family members are black and biracial and the photographer was essentially emphasizing a visual of the line that existed but had not ever really been named or talked about in an obvious way. And so there everyone stood in a picture now frozen in time ... light on one side and dark on the other.

This family is mine. At the time, I remember my 16-year-old self took note, but I really didn't know how to name what was happening and I didn't know how to stop it. I do now and I continue to learn what this means. When I spoke to my cousins about this sermon and using this story – because it's their story more than it is mine – I had the opportunity to hear their experience of this time and what they remember, and in some cases, the pain they still carry with them. It was a helpful and important conversation to have ... even if it took me 28 more years to finally have it.

And I guess for me, this is another point highlighted in this story. If Jesus can get these hard conversations so wrong, what does that say and mean for the rest of us? It took me way too long to talk to my cousins about this because I felt like I didn't know how and I was afraid. And I think Jesus' response to the Canaanite woman is one that gives some of us pause for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is how we too can screw up these important conversations. If Jesus can get it this wrong with the Canaanite woman ... if he can choose the wrong words ... if he can approach her unaware of what privilege he may carry in that moment ... it doesn't instill in me a lot of confidence that I ... in my own position of comfortable white privilege ... am going to get it right. But silence is no longer an option. We can no longer choose to not to engage in these difficult conversations involving race, gender, and other blatant inequalities because we fear getting it wrong and being called out on that. Choosing not to is, in fact, condoning and participating in the maintenance of racist and unequal structures and systems that are still so engrained in this world and which threaten the lives and well-being of so many.

³ Walter Brueggemann, *A Way Other than Our Own: Devotions for Lent*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2016, p 18.

On June 10th, Brene Brown on her podcast “Unlocking Us” hosted author, media producer, activist, educator and racial justice advocate, Austin Channing Brown. In their conversation, Channing Brown shared the following thoughts. She said:

I tell people all the time that the work of anti-racism is the work of becoming a better human ... that’s the work ... we’re becoming better humans so that we treat other humans better. It’s what we’re doing here, even though it [can] feel terrible ... but we’re also not interested in trying to hurt your feelings. We’re not interested in trying to manipulate you; we’re not interested in all the things that anti-racism educators get accused of. We are saying, ‘I think you have the capacity to be a better human ... would you ... could you accept that invitation?’⁴

The Canaanite woman was unwilling to walk away from this conversation with Jesus. She pressed on, even though I’m sure his words hurt her, but she pressed on because the life of her child was at stake. And, ultimately, what she offered to Jesus, was an opportunity to expand his ministry to embrace ALL of humanity ... to cross a line in order to offer love and care to ALL people. And for his part, Jesus hung in there, even when the conversation was difficult ... Jesus didn’t allow himself to stay stuck where he was ... he didn’t storm away when the Canaanite woman challenged him. He is open enough to learn from her – a desperate woman who came from an enemy territory. He allowed her to pull him over the line that had been established by years of social and religious expectation and tradition, and Jesus meets the Canaanite woman where she is at; on her turf. He ultimately heals her daughter from within her own race, culture and country ... no conversion necessary.

This is where God’s grace always meets me in this story. Neither Jesus nor the woman remain bound by the lines that divided them ... the concept of ancient purity ... race, gender, education ... and even though Jesus didn’t get the conversation right at the beginning, he stayed for the hard stuff; he was open to being taught and doing better. And the woman, whose desperate and stubborn refusal to see her daughter made well, she didn’t give up either. She believed in this man - this preacher, teacher and healer and the love of the God she knew he embodied.

Are we going to get the hard conversations right 100% of the time? Not on your life. Do we still need to engage in these difficult but life-giving conversations? Yes. 100% of the time. Those of us who sit in a position of privilege are called to enter into these conversations in love ... to walk alongside and to be taught, which includes being quiet and listening, but then to also use our voices to advocate for and with others ... to become aware of our privilege and to use it as a means to rise up against injustice. It means being called out when we don’t get it right. Just like the Canaanite woman did with Jesus so many years ago.

May it be so with us. AMEN.

⁴ Brene Brown, Podcast, “Brene Brown with Austin Channing Brown on I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World made for Whiteness,” brenebrown.com, June 10, 2020, <https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-austin-channing-brown-on-im-still-here-black-dignity-in-a-world-made-for-whiteness/>, accessed on July 4, 2020.

Refrain

*Healer of our every ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.*

1. You who know our fears and sadness,
grace us with your peace and gladness;
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *{Refrain}*
2. In the pain and joy beholding
how your grace is still unfolding,
give us all your vision, God of love. *{Refrain}*
3. Give us strength to love each other,
every sister, every brother,
Spirit of all kindness, be our guide. *{Refrain}*
4. You who know each thought and feeling,
teach us all your way of healing;
Spirit of compassion, fill each heart. *{Refrain}*

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PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- P: Separated by distance in our homes and yet called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. Each petition will end with the phrase “Lord in your mercy” and I invite you to respond with the words, “hear our prayer.” *(Pause)*

Lord, you gather the church to be part of your mission as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. As Jesus acknowledged the great faith of a woman from outside his people, help your church discover and find blessing in the faith of people we might reject. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have blessed us with the bounty of the earth. Grant your grace to all your creatures, that the earth will flourish. Revive waters choked by garbage, renew soils stripped of nutrients, and refresh the air all creatures need to live. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You call the nations to be glad and sing for joy. Let your way be known among all the nations of the world, now divided by competing interests, contending alliances, and consumed by enormous worry. Bless and make your face shine upon all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You show unexpected mercy, kindness, and generosity. We pray for those who do not have enough, for outcasts in our villages, cities, and town, and for those who need your healing. In this season of Pentecost we pray for: Ferolyn, Angela, Jordan, Pat, Grace, Joel, Dorothy, Carol, Ruth, Beryl, Karen, Barb, Elethia, Pat, and for all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts. *(Pause)* Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In you we live and move and have our being. Grant our congregation called St. James grace to find our life refreshed in you. Accompany us in the rhythms of late summer. Give us rest and renewal, and strengthen us for mission in your name. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your eternal promises are more than we could every imagine. As you gather the saints, join us also with them on the great day of your salvation. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

P: And now as our Saviour Jesus has taught us we are bold to pray:.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

P: Touched, changed, called and empowered,
go now in the power and provision of Christ to heal the sick,
feed the hungry, and serve the world.

God the creator, Jesus ✙ the Christ,
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,
bless you and keep you in eternal life.

C: **Amen**

SENDING SONG

EvLW #886

Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing v 1,2,3,6

1 Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and king,
the triumphs of his grace!

2 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of your name.

3 The name of Jesus charms our fears
and bids our sorrows cease,
sings music in the sinner's ears,
brings life and health and peace.

6 To God all glory, praise, and love
be now and ever giv'n
by saints below and saints above,
the church in earth and heav'n.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Christ is with you!

C: **Thanks be to God.**