



Pentecost 11

16 August 2020

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

Eternal God, our only lasting security is with you.
Only you will still be there for us when all other supports fail.
Only you will still be there when all our wanderings are over.
When we come back from all the wrong ways we have taken;
Enlarge us with your truth, Holy spirit. then you will still be there.
The threads of hope weave through all our fearfulness.
Praise be to you, O God, we acknowledge you with the hope that faith alone can give us.
We turn to you as your people with a song of hope rising from the shadows of our pain.

Hymn 107

*Sing praise and thanksgiving let all creatures living
now worship their maker with gladness and song;
all glory and honour we come to him bringing:*

*O praise to the Almighty,
sing praise to our God!*

*Lord, frame our desiring to do your requiring,
that unto your glory be all that we do;
and where we have faltered, give strength and give healing:*

*O praise to the Almighty,
sing praise to our God!*

Confession and Assurance in Hope

Forgive us, O God, for the smallness of our faith: our joy in you is too confined, our hopes are not high enough; our vision is not long enough.

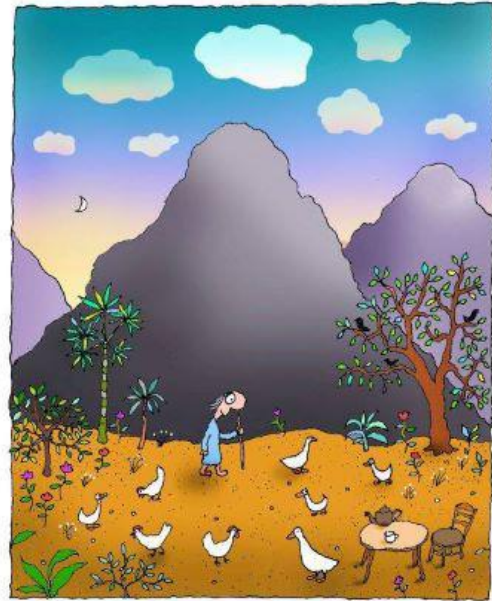
Enlarge us with your truth, Holy spirit.

Do not allow the difficulties, dangers and evils of the present time to undermine our faith, sap our joy, and diminish our hope.

Enlarge us with your truth, Holy spirit.

WISH LIST

Sanity, beauty, kindness, care
All so simple if you dare
Sweet Forgiveness, patience, peace,
Chickens, blackbirds, ducks and geese.
Trees and flowers, grass and seeds,
Hands and feet and coloured beads.
Cups of tea and distant bells
Clouds and mountains, cooking smells,
A garden path, a wooden chair,
Sanity, beauty, kindness, care.



Open our eyes to see your glory coming into its own so that we may fulfil your purpose for us: to be light for the world and the bearers of your grace for all the world with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Enlarge us with your truth, Holy spirit.

No-one who comes to God will be turned away. Jesus knows our deepest need and bids us come into the full experience of resurrection life with him.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn 552

*Come, my way, my truth, my life,
such a way as gives us breath,
such a truth as ends all strife,
such a life as killeth death.*

*Come, my joy, my love, my heart,
such a joy as none can move,
such a love as none can part,
such a heart as joys in love.*

Scripture and Weber/Rice Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.

Genesis 45:1-9

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

So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And 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 yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And 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 tarry.

*So Jacob came to Egypt, no longer feeling old,
And Joseph came to meet him in his chariot of gold,
of gold, of gold.*

The family saga has become the salvation story of Jacob/Israel. Thus what God had ordained in the story of Abraham and God's amazing promise of an unimaginable future for a still fledgling people, Jacob/Israel, continues towards its ultimate fulfilment in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in an unknown and far off future. A future in which another descendant of the promise to Abraham is to wrestle with his role in the fulfilment of the ancient promise.

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I[Paul] myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. (Romans 11:1-2a)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33,36)

In this is the word of the Lord.

Hymn 554

*If we will trust in God to guide us
and hope in him along life's way,
we'll know his wonderful protection,
through cross and sadness, every day
When we are led by God's strong hand,
we build on rock, not sinking sand.*

*Let us be still and find enjoyment
in life, with heart and mind content
to take whatever God our Father
in his all-knowing love has sent:
for all our deepest needs are known
by God who chose us for his own.*

*Sing, pray, and be prepared to follow
with faithfulness along God's way,
and trust the heavenly Father's blessings:
then you will find them new each day.
For those who trust in God to lead,
he never will forsake in need.*

Gospel Matthew 15:21-28

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out 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." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread 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, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Thanks be to God for the Gospel

Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

At first glance there seems to be a harsh and unfeeling ambience about this encounter with the Canaanite woman. Yes, it was an irregular request being, as it certainly was, by an outsider and, therefore, not within the gamut of responsibility for Jesus and his disciples. Nonetheless Jesus, unlike the disciples, did respond, both by drawing attention to the requests irregular nature and by acknowledging the individuals concerns and need. Yes, any request arising out of need and hope will be heard by God and the petitioner can expect his compassion and love, unreservedly. There are no boundaries of rights and responsibilities where God is concerned for such is the essence of God's ongoing interaction with his creation and his people. If we look back to the story of Joseph, we see a young son taking precedence in the eyes of his father and easily understood resentment in the rest of the family resulting in a chain of events that is wicked and extreme. Surely not to be understood as the will of God! Yet ultimately that is how Joseph sees it and how he ultimately responds. So in the family saga the resistance to God by the protagonists in the story of Joseph and Joseph's response to them is a faithful resolution in which the will of God is served. Indeed, this is a pattern in the overall faith history that occurs again and again. So, In the ongoing history of faith, more than a thousand years on, Paul's resistance to God was finally to find resolution in his absolute commitment to Jesus as Lord of all in spite of his, Paul's, heartfelt longing for his own people to see and accept this when they continue to reject this. As God ordains the will of God is served.

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All those who come in faith and hope are included in God's all-embracing love and compassion. The reign of God is to be universal, not exclusive. All of us may have reason to be excluded or diminished in the eyes of others at one time or another. All fall short of perfection apart from our Lord himself. Yet his one ultimate command to us is

**"You therefore must be perfect,
as your heavenly Father is perfect."**

Matthew 5:48

Maybe we are afraid that Jesus will turn away from us because of our particular unworthiness as we perceive it. Yet the word of Jesus to an outsider long ago was

**"O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you
desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.**

Matthew 15:28

People of faith who break through barriers and approach their God with nothing but the confidence of faith will always be honoured by him.

O Lord may your word live in us
and bear much fruit to your glory.

Hymn 648

*Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us
and bring us to believe
we are **ourselves** accepted
and meant to love and live.*

*Let your acceptance change us,
so that we may be moved
in living situations
to do the truth in love.;
to practise your acceptance
until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness
and laughter's healing art.*

*Lord, for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for righteousness and bread,
we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
Lord, free us, make us one!*

Prayers for Ourselves and Others and Lord's Prayer

Like the woman from Cana, we bring to you our prayers, O God.

As we do this we think of those whose lives and situations we should bring before you.

WE JOIN IN PRAYER FOR:

- The people of Beirut and Lebanon, and the Lebanese diaspora who are in mourning.
- The victims of nuclear weapons over the last 75 years and the courageous advocates who work to end the threat of nuclear destruction.
- Our young leaders in culturally diverse communities.
- The worship, witness and service of Uniting Church Presbyteries.

Invite in us as we join with our whole church compassion and concern for these great needs in the world today.

Hold all such as these in the hollow of your hand, gracious and loving God. May we, in faith, cross all the barriers which lie between us and your saving grace for all humankind.

and so, we pray as you taught us

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 forever.

Amen

Benediction

May the way towards love for all be like a pathway before us,
and God our Sustainer, Saviour and Creator
surround us with hope and joy.

Amen

Reverend Graeme Kerr

Next Tuesday, the 19th. August, marks the first anniversary of the death of my youngest brother, Dr Charles Kerr. So I dedicate this Service, with its Gospel focus on the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman, to my youngest brother and his many years of healing service. He was much loved by his family and greatly respected in the communities of Tatura and Mooroopna and Shepparton; and then of Bendigo and Castlemaine. His work in medicine, both as practitioner and teacher, was truly legendary. His great love was emergency medicine, so I like to think of his work as 'of a kind' with the healing Jesus in the service of God. Yes; God. In a letter he left for me to be read after his death (which he knew was imminent)

Charles wrote

"it would be easy to doubt the existence of God. So many events in life seem to defy the concept. But there is an overall synergy in life that exceeds the sum of the efforts of man, and demands that God is.... I feel no uncertainty. That God exists I have no doubt. My place in creation is determined by the skills I have been granted. How I have utilised those gifts is the basis of my judgement.... The Christian church teaches humility but I cannot accept that the pride I feel for my achievements is a sin. That God is the force behind my ability to achieve does not lessen but, rather reinforces that pride". Many are called, but few are chosen. Charles was, indeed chosen and he responded to his call unfailingly.

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How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

...For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.

Amen.

Prayer for Beirut by Beirut by Levon Kardashian,

The UCA ENewsletter included this prayer by Levon Kardashian.

He is Secretary of the UCA Middle Eastern National Conference. He grew up in the city of Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon. For more information the link is:

<https://theoblogy.org.au/prayer-for-beirut/>

Prayer

God of creation, You create the Cedars of Lebanon and give them their majesty to withstand all tribulations for your own pleasure. You exalt them to represent eternity, strength, and endurance. Yet we have cut them down and destroyed them for our own personal pleasures. As we remember the Cedars of Lebanon, we also remember the people of Lebanon in their diversity of cultures and faith.

God of explosions and pollution, Out of the depths we call to you; in the face of incomprehensible anguish and sorrow, we lift the cries of our distress and implore you to show mercy upon those who are suffering from the destruction of the explosion in Beirut and the ensuing chemical pollution. Give protection and wisdom to emergency service personnel, doctors, nurses, hospitals, and all those who assist in elevating the pain and suffering of those affected. Encourage our generosity to those who suffer loss. In your mercy restore your creation and heal our land.

We pray for those who have been injured in body, mind or spirit and ask you to heal them; Grant us all firm resolve to stand with our neighbours who are in need, to love them and to offer our generous support of them in this their time of trouble.

Amen.