

St John's

Prayers:

Lord Jesus, help us to see that our common life depends on each other's work and goodwill. May we work for peace and be generous in all that we do.

We pray that those who call out to you in great faith find your heart open to their cries. We ask for healing for the sick and suffering, among them:

Sick: Scott Bradley, Dawn Forey, Ruth Gillespie, Hanna Lebrato, Jack Mannix, Marion Mason and Sue Ralfe.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Contacts

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The Parish Office is closed.

**Matthew and Jonny say
Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer each day
Join in [here](#).**

St John's Church Pew Sheet 16th August 2020

Welcome!

The Government has allowed places of worship to open for individual prayer and services.

St John's Church is open for prayer:
10.30am-12.30pm each day

St John's Church is open for services:
9.30am Sundays
10.30am Wednesdays

Our online services will continue for the time being.

**"Then Jesus answered her,
'Woman, great is your faith!'
Let it be done for you as you wish."
Matthew 15:28**

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST - MISSION STATEMENT

Drawn together by Christ's love, we seek by his grace to live out his commandments to love the Lord our God with all of our being; and to love everyone we come across as we love ourselves.

www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk

Please do check our website for future updates

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The Tenth Sunday After Trinity

Collect

Lord of heaven and earth, as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer, give us patience and courage never to lose hope, but always to bring our prayers before you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible Readings (click on links to access passages):

[Isaiah 56:1, 6-8](#)

[Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32](#)

[Matthew 15:21-28](#)

Short Sermon by the Rector, the Revd Matthew Stone

In today's passages we encounter the prickly theme of "chosenness." Does God have favourites? Not an easy question to confront or to answer especially when we now know what terrible acts have been perpetrated by those who believe that God is on their side – and that includes both Christians and non-Christians.

In the Gospel today, we encounter a side of Jesus that affronts our modern sensibilities and certainly our political correctness. The words Jesus uses to argue with the Canaanite woman are not ones we expect from his mouth. Jesus has been teaching and walking across the country followed by large crowds. He heals the sick, forgives sins and challenges the established thinking on God. To everyone who thinks that God is satisfied with external piety he brings the enormous challenge of his spirit and his personal knowledge: God looks into the heart. God is not pleased with mere observances; God requires a new way of thinking, of praying, of being. And now tired and needing to escape the crowds, Jesus moves north out of Israel into what we know as Lebanon, the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus is accosted by a woman not with a polite request, but with shouting. She must have heard about him even before he entered her city because she is ready. She is not a Jew, yet she is using language that is familiar only to Jews of the time. She calls him "Son of David." She is absolutely certain that Jesus is who he says he is and that he alone has the power to heal her little daughter who was sick. And be-

cause she loves her daughter she will beg, ask and shout until his power gives her what she wants.

In her pleading, her shouting, she asks first for mercy and then for healing. Apparently, Jesus keeps on walking, but she follows. She doesn't give up. Jesus, however, is silent. Now Jesus says something not to her or to them: It would appear that he is examining a question in his own mind: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This is his mission – to bring his people, the Israelites, back to God.

The woman hears his words but does not budge, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the masters' table." This poor outsider understands that God's mercy is so great that even the tiny bit that escapes from the chosen ones is enough for healing and for doing good. This is what faith means. And Jesus responds to this faith instantly. In those few minutes, he recognises that his mission has expanded. A poor woman has shown him this much: he did not come just for the children of Israel. His mercy extends to everyone. Full of admiration, he responds first to her great faith, and then to her wish for her daughter: "Your faith is great. Your daughter is well."

So it is that we all benefit from that woman's faith. An outcast becomes a catalyst. This is the wonder of the gospel stories. The Good News comes from unexpected places. Instead of sending the woman away, he expands his mission from the limits of Judaea to the rest of the world. Once again, God brings good out of what has seemed evil. The 'dogs' enter the same realm as the children. They now eat from the table and not just of the crumbs that fall from it. We owe this woman a great deal. And the prophecy of Isaiah concerning foreigners is fulfilled: They, too, can minister to the Lord.

The Incarnation is vivid in this story, as is the theology of kenosis – the 'self-emptying' of our will to become receptive to God's will. Jesus learns something from a humble woman and from a mother's love. This is a story to be honoured, to be proclaimed and to fill us with gratitude. "Lord have mercy on me," she cries. And the Lord shows mercy to one considered an outcast. God's mercy covers all of us. Amen.