

## **WORSHIP AT HOME – SUNDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020**

**Call to Worship:** Living God, we thank you that you greet us and call us by name. Touch us with your love, and help us to praise and to serve you. Help us to reach out in prayer, and to touch the source of grace that we find in you. Lord, make us just; help us to be fair; teach us to love each other and ourselves in your blessed name. Amen.

**The words to ‘We cannot measure how you heal’ written by John L Bell [b.1949] and Graham Maule [b.1958]. [The tune to this is ‘Ye banks and braes’ {The Banks O’ Doon}]**

1 We cannot measure how you heal or answer every sufferer’s prayer,  
yet we believe your grace responds where faith and doubt unite to care.  
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross, survive to hold and heal and warn,  
to carry all through death to life and cradle children yet unborn.

2 The pain that will not go away, the guilt that clings from things long past,  
the fear of what the future holds, are present as if meant to last.  
But present too is love which tends the hurt we never hoped to find,  
those private agonies inside, the memories that haunt the mind.

3 So some have come who need your help and some have come to make amends  
as hands which shaped and saved the world are present in the touch of friends.  
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here to mend the body, mind and soul,  
to disentangle peace from pain and make your broken people whole.

**Prayer:** Lord, we know that we cannot come together in our church building to meet with you, but in our own homes we do come to you and ask you to meet us wherever we are.

Lord Jesus Christ, you touched the sick and made them well – you touched the lepers and made them clean – you touched the blind and made them see – you touched the lame and made them walk. In these and in so many other ways you brought healing but, more wonderful still, you brought wholeness – a health of body, mind and spirit. We thank you, Lord.

Reach out to all who suffer today, and work through all those to whom you have entrusted the ministry of healing in all its many forms. Grant your renewing, restoring touch through them, and grant also the blessing which you alone can bring – your strength and inner peace which nothing we may face can finally destroy. In your holy name we pray – Amen.

A prayer of confession: Lord, we confess that we don’t always think things through and sometimes we rush into situations where perhaps we ought not to go. Sometimes, we hang about outside when we should be in there doing what we can in your name. We are not always sensitive to the needs of others. Lord, forgive us, and teach us to listen, not only with our ears but with our whole being. Amen.

**Lord’s Prayer:** 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, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Mark 5: 21-43 taken from The Message [the translation written by Eugene Peterson]. It is entitled ‘A Risk of Faith’.**

After Jesus crossed over by boat, a large crowd met him on the shore. One of the meeting-place leaders named Jairus came. When he saw Jesus, he fell to his knees, beside himself as he begged. 'My dear daughter is at death's door. Come and lay hands on her so she will get well and live.' Jesus went with him, the whole crowd tagging along, pushing and jostling him.

A woman who had suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years – a long succession of physicians had treated her, and treated her badly, taking all her money and leaving her worse off than before – had heard about Jesus. She slipped in from behind and touched his robe. She was thinking to herself, 'If I can put a finger on his robe, I can get well.' The moment she did it the flow of blood dried up. She could feel the change and knew her plague was over and done with.

At the same moment, Jesus felt energy discharging from him. He turned around to the crowd and asked: 'Who touched my robe?'

His disciples said: 'What are you talking about? With this crowd pushing and jostling you, you're asking who touched you! Dozens have touched you!'

But he went on looking around to see who had done it. The woman, knowing what had happened, knowing she was the one, stepped up in fear and trembling, knelt before him, and gave him the whole story.

Jesus said to her: 'Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you're healed and whole. Live well. Live blessed. Be healed of your plague.'

While he was still talking, some people came from the leader's house and told him: 'Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher anymore.'

Jesus overheard what they were talking about and said to the leader: 'Don't listen to them. Just trust me.' He permitted no-one to go in with him except Peter, James and John. They entered the leader's house and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and neighbours bringing in casseroles. Jesus was abrupt: 'Why all this busybody grief and gossip? This child isn't dead – she is sleeping.' Provoked to sarcasm, they told him he didn't know what he was talking about.

But when he had sent them all out, he took the child's father and mother, along with his companions, and entered the child's room. He clasped the girl's hand and said: '*Talitha koum*,' which means, 'Little girl, get up.' At that, she was up and walking around! This girl was twelve years of age. They, of course, were all beside themselves with joy. He gave them strict orders that no-one was to know what had taken place in that room. Then he said: 'Give her something to eat'.

*Thanks be to God for his word. Amen.*

There are two strong stories of healing here so let us look at them separately. First we think of the woman who had been suffering for years. She had one great fear – that she would never be well again – that she will always be bone-tired, pale, thin, listless and in pain. She feared that also this would mean that she would always be alone – never accepted as fully part of the community. Now, with Jesus near, she decided to brave the fear of being discovered by the crowd who would reject her because the slightest contact with her would have rendered them unclean according to the Law. She edged nearer and nearer until she could reach out in the melee and touch the hem of his robe.

Think of this poor woman who had lived with this condition for so long – who perhaps once had had enough money to go to doctors and to go on spending money expecting that they would be able to cure her. Now, though, she was poor and tired – even cowed. Too cowed by the way she had been thought of as unclean for so long that she probably thought that if she had approached to ask for help directly, she would have been turned away. However she was desperate enough to creep in and touch. So while the men were concentrating on moving off towards Jairus' house, she seized her chance and reached out and brushed Jesus' robe as they passed her. No doubt she had thought she would be able to hobble away to her home where she would wait – and hope; but she must have been shocked by her body's reaction – she felt better than she had for years.

And then she heard those words: 'Who touched me?'

Jane Williams, a writer and lecturer puts it this way: '*She could have stood silent, but part of her needed the crowd to see what had happened to her, to make it real, to assure her that she wasn't imagining it, even if*

*she got into terrible trouble. It was strange to have all those eyes on her when she had spent years with eyes that avoided her or slid away from her fast. Most of the eyes were not friendly. She was just a distraction, kneeling there, abject and shaking..... They expected Jesus to push her away, perhaps even make her ill again. Instead, he told her she had done right, and that her [regained] health is what she deserved and had won for herself.'*

How wonderful for her that the disease had gone – but actually it was much more than that physical healing. She must have new meaning in life – new hope, new purpose; her strength would have returned – and think of the peace. Jesus had healed her.

From Nick Fawcett: *The woman speaks: 'He sensed my need that day before I had even expressed it, responding instinctively to my silent plea; and I'm whole now – whole in body, whole in mind, whole in spirit – ready for whatever life might bring – ready for anything!'*

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When Jesus asks any one of us: 'Who touched me?' could you say: 'It was I, Lord.'? Do you keep in proper contact with Jesus? When the woman touched him, power travelled from Jesus to her. We so often fail to achieve things because we go it alone and do not touch base with Jesus.

**Here are the words to the hymn: 'What a friend we have in Jesus' written by Joseph Medlicott Scriven [1819 – 1886]. Singing the Faith no. 531**

1 What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

2 Have we trials and temptations, is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged: take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness: take it to the Lord in prayer.

3 Are we weak and heavy-laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Saviour – still our refuge – take it to the Lord in prayer!

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer;

In his arms he'll take and shield you, you will find a sojourn there.

So, what became of Jairus and his daughter? He had rushed to find Jesus sure that he was the only one who could save Jairus' beloved daughter. No doubt his daughter was the light of his - and her mother's – eye; their joy and a living expression of their love. Now it seemed that that light was about to go out and darkness and pain take its place.

Jairus himself was the leader of the synagogue – the administrator, seeing to the good running of the premises and overseeing the list of who would lead the services and preach. So, an important man – one of good standing and well-respected. Now, here he threw himself at the feet of a wandering preacher. In his position, Jairus was probably wary of Jesus – he may even have wondered if Jesus was a heretic – but now he put aside any pride or prejudice; now he begged Jesus to come and help his daughter. And Jesus immediately went with him.

It would have been hard to make their way through the crowds – and that is when Jesus stopped as he felt power go out of him when his robe was touched. Jesus listened to the woman and healed her. Jairus must have been beside himself – he wanted Jesus to go to the little girl. Then, just as they were moving again the dreaded news came – she was dead. No longer any need for Jesus to come – it was too late. Jairus would have been distraught – but Jesus looked at him and told him not to fear, but to believe.

They would have walked into such noise at the house – professional mourners would have been weeping and wailing – flute players would have been playing sad songs. Jesus told them: 'The child is not dead, but sleeping.' They didn't believe him and went on weeping and wailing. So Jesus got everyone except the girl's parents out of the house and he went with them and with Peter, James and John into the girl's room. Jesus went to the child, took her by the hand and said: '*Talitha kum*', or 'Little girl, get up.' And that is just what

she did – she got up with Jesus holding her hands. Jesus was practical and told her parents that what the child now needed was to be fed.

### **Jairus speaks: a meditation written by Nick Fawcett:**

I can't tell you how awful it was or how devastated I felt when my servants broke through the crowd to break the news. There was no need for them to speak, one look at their faces said it all – she was dead, my beautiful, precious daughter lost to me forever – and it was as though my whole world fell apart at that moment.

I'd dared to hope, you see; I'd actually believed that this man Jesus might yet save her where all others had failed – and when he agreed to come, my heart had missed a beat in anticipation at the promise of that awful cloud lifting at last.

But now I knew it was all over – and, quite simply, I was overcome; nothing and no-one seeming to matter anymore – not even Jesus. To be honest I'd forgotten he was still there, his presence insignificant beside the intensity of my grief – until suddenly I heard his voice and felt his hand upon my shoulder, and I realised *he'd* not forgotten *me* for his concern was anything but at an end.

'Do not fear,' he told me, 'only believe.'

As simple as that – no embellishment, no explanation, just that quiet, unruffled instruction.

Well, I didn't know what to think! Hadn't the man been listening? My daughter was dead, all hope extinguished – nothing now anyone could do, even him. Yet there was something about his presence which made it impossible to argue, so we walked on together, and to be truthful, I was glad of his company – the calmness, the peace, and the sense of purpose which radiated from him, somehow giving solace in my hour of despair.

He'd discover what had happened soon enough, and, who could tell, maybe even then he might have some crumb of comfort to offer.

But when we got back home – the family sobbing their hearts out – my wife just about inconsolable – then, as if I didn't have enough on my plate, his attitude really began to trouble me, for he carried on as if nothing had happened – as if it were all fussing over a storm in a teacup. 'Why all the commotion?' he asked. 'She's only sleeping.'

Sleeping! I could hardly believe my ears! What was wrong with the fellow? Could he really not see it, even now? Little wonder the neighbours laughed at him.

Yet somehow I didn't have the heart to argue – it just didn't seem worth the hassle – so I let him usher everyone out of the house [everyone but myself and the family], and then we went in to where she was lying, just where I'd left her a short time before – but so white now – so still – so cold.

I watched in a daze as he reached out, scarcely able to see with the tears running down my face – and then I heard a voice, *his* voice, gentle but firm, 'Little girl, get up!'

And, believe it or not, she did! She opened her eyes and walked towards us, for all the world as though she'd simply been sleeping after all!

I can't make sense of it, no – what he did or how he did it is beyond my ability to fathom – but I tell you this – my daughter was dead, and he brought her back to life – my heart was broken, and he filled it again with joy – and if he can do that, then, quite honestly, what can't he do?

It seems to me nothing is beyond him.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, we pray for all who are ill. **Come, lay your hands on them.**

We pray for all who tend the sick; we pray for medical staff; we pray for carers remembering those who care for their own loved ones, and those who care for the loved ones of others.

We pray for researchers and scientists and we pray for the support services – for cleaners and managers, porters and budget holders – for all whose caring work supports others.

We pray for paramedics and all in the emergency services who go into difficult and unknown situations.

We pray for medical staff who work beyond their own communities – for medical charities and mission organisations. We pray for all those who work with families at 'end of life' care, and we pray for funeral

directors and their staff as they treat those who have died with dignity, and their families with respect and comfort. We pray for all those we know in our own community who are ill or lonely.

Come, Lord, **and lay your hands on them.**

Grant us all a healing touch, Lord. Give us the wisdom and respect to see each person we help as an individual – a child of God. **Amen.**

**A Personal Prayer [taken from Roots Magazine July 2012]:**

I don't know how you did it, Lord. Always on the go, always juggling all the people who needed you so much. You must have got so tired at times, but you were always so sensitive to people's needs.

Lord, I have so much to live up to as I try to follow you. Please help me to sort out in my life what needs to be done now and what can wait, so that in all things I can be a better servant for you. Amen.

**Words to the hymn 'I heard the voice of Jesus say' written by Horatius N. Bonar [1808-1889]. StF 248:**

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say: 'Come unto me and rest;  
lay down, O weary one, lay down your head upon my breast.  
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad,  
I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say: 'Behold, I freely give  
the living water; thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live.'  
I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream;  
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say: 'I am this dark world's Light;  
look unto me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright.'  
I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun;  
and in that light of life I'll walk, till travelling days are done.

**Closing Prayer and Blessing:**

Lord, when things go well, or our life falls apart, we will be your people.

When we are alone or in a crowd, we will be your people.

When we are full and when we are empty, we will be your people.

When we feel, lost, afraid or broken, we will be your people.

Wherever we go and whatever we face, we will be your people.

Lord, fill us with your Spirit, that we may live for your glory and as the people of God. **Amen.**

And may the blessing of God – the Father who created us; the Son who found us and saved us; and the Holy Spirit who lives and works within us – be with us all and all whom we love this day and forevermore. **Amen.**