

2022 28TH AUGUST WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

I am afraid that this week's offering to you is rather shorter than usual. I had prepared the piece with only the final hymn and prayer to do – and I lost the lot! This is a very busy week and so I cannot complete the normal amount again just this week. I am sorry that this has happened – and will be back to normal next week!

Every blessing, *Margaret.*

Call to worship: Today may we bring to God not only the words on our lips, but the praise in our hearts. May we bring our honesty and bravery, our anxiety and fears – all that we carry in our hearts. May we meet with Jesus, who accepts us – flaws and all – with forgiveness and grace.

Open our eyes, Lord, our ears and our hearts. May we be quick to see where you are at work – quick to listen for your word – quick to offer love and hope, and slow to judge.

Unchanging God, refresher, healer, and restorer, give us wisdom and discernment today. We come to seek you and to hear you – to be still and present with you, to be transformed. **Amen.**

Words to 'Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost' written by Christopher Wordsworth [1807-1885] StF 379

1 Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost, taught by you, we covet most
of your gifts at Pentecost, holy, heavenly love.

2 Faith that mountains could remove, tongues of earth or heaven above,
knowledge of all things, empty prove without heavenly love.

3 Prophecy will fade away, melting in the light of day;
love will ever with us stay: therefore give us love.

4 Love is kind, and suffers long, love is meek and thinks no wrong,
love than death itself more strong, therefore give us love.

5 Faith, and hope, and love we see, joining hand in hand agree;
but the greatest of three, and the best, is love.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for our communities and thank you that you have set us where you want us to be.
Thank you for those who support us.

Thank you for giving us strength to help one another – and that you can turn us inside out as we work together to make our communities the places you want them to be.

Thank you for the strength to be doers and hearers of the word.

Thank you that every perfect gift is from you. **Amen**

Unblemished God, forgive us when we adhere to laws that are not of you – and when we criticise others because their ways are not our ways.

Forgive us for times when we have not supported one another in love, or protected those who are vulnerable.

Forgive us for whenever we have corrupted your laws and gone our own way, or when we have not nurtured those in our own families and communities and so let them go astray.

Lord, cleanse our hearts and make us pure.

Help us to live as one community, bound together in love and grace. **Amen.**

Thank you, O God, that we are a forgiven people, cleansed and restored by you, made pure in your image.
Today we are free because of the cross. **Amen.**

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and 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 for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21- 23

The Pharisees and some religious leaders who had come from Jerusalem, gathered round Jesus. They noticed that some of his disciples weren't being careful with ritual washings before meals. The Pharisees – well, Jews in general, in fact – would never eat a meal without going through the motions of ritual hand-washing, with an especially vigorous scrubbing if they had just come from the market [to say nothing of the scouring they would give jugs, and pots, and pans.]

The Pharisees and religion scholars asked: 'Why do your disciples flout the rules, showing up at meals without washing their hands?'

Jesus answered: 'Isaiah was right about frauds like you, hit the bull's-eye, in fact, as he wrote:

"These people make a big show of saying the right thing, but their heart isn't in it.

They act as if they are worshipping me, but they don't mean it. They just use me as a cover for teaching whatever suits their fancy, ditching God's command and taking up the latest fads."

Jesus called the crowd together again and said: 'Listen now, all of you – take this to heart. It's not what you swallow that pollutes your life, it's what you vomit – that's the real pollution.'

'It's what comes out of a person that pollutes – obscenities, lusts, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, depravity, deceptive dealings, carousing, mean looks, slander, arrogance, foolishness – all these are vomit from the heart. *There* is the source of your pollution.'

Comment: [Roots for Churches Ltd]

The way that the lectionary cuts up Mark 7 is slightly troubling for in omitting verses 9-13 it strips verses 6-8 of their context and makes it sound like a baseless attack on decent people. That said, however, this is an account of a sparring match between Jesus and the Pharisees over the law.

The encounter comes in the wake of the feeding of the five thousand. The crowd is still buzzing with the fall-out from that – the disciples are still trying to get their heads round what happened on the hillside and in the boat in the storm – and yet the Pharisees nit-pick over handwashing. Jesus is having none of it and explodes at them with a quote from Isaiah [29:13] and an assault [in mark vs 9-13] on their practice of allowing people to join their group, commit some loose change to the cause, and declare everything they own belongs to God [though they still control it!] as a way of getting out of their obligation to look after their parents.

Inevitably, what began as a dispute with the Pharisees draws an audience and Jesus then talks to the crowd. It seems that his agenda is to challenge the authority of the Pharisees to interpret the law, so this is high stakes stuff. What Jesus says is pretty obvious, that what you eat doesn't defile you but what you say and do, how you treat people which can do that. In both Greek and Hebrew thinking, the heart is the seat of thought and action, so what you put in the heart will determine what you think is right, and how you live in the light of that.

Again, the lectionary misses out on another key point [vs 17-19] where Mark makes a general point out of what Jesus is saying, namely, that all goods are clean, and nothing is on the proscribed list. For Mark's Roman readers this means that pig-meat, the staple of Roman cuisine, is still on the menu – good news indeed for them.

Prayer:

Living God, teach us what it truly means to honour you, truly to live as your people. Help us to understand that you do not seek outward show – nor even obedience to rules and commandments – but a heart that loves you, a spirit that seeks you, and a mind that longs to know you better.

Save us from worshipping you with our lips but being far from you in our lives.

In all we do, may we be open to your will and alert to your guidance, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The words to ‘Give me a heart of compassion’ by Jim Bailey. Songs of Fellowship 726

[Copyright Thankyou Music 1997]

1 Give me a heart of compassion, give me a hope for the lost.

Give me a passion for those who are broken and down.

Lord, I am ready and willing to serve the weak and the young;

Help me to put into action the words of this song.

And enable Your servants, enable your servants to preach good news

To preach good news.

2 I’ll sing the songs of salvation, boldly I’ll speak out your word.

I’ll let them know by my life – I will show You are the Lord.

I’ll tell them all about Jesus, I’ll tell them all about You.

I’m not ashamed of the gospel or what it can do.

3 We’re moving forward together – as one voice boldly proclaim –

The old and the young will be strong, and we’ll lift up your name

On to the streets to the people, every man, woman, and child.

And as we go You are with us, You’ve given Your power.

You’ve enabled your servants – you’ve enabled Your servants, to preach the good news

Closing Prayer:

Lord, go with us into our everyday lives,

To honour you in all that we do and say.

May our being and doing

Collect your love and your power.

And when next we meet,

May we recognise with thanks the prompting of your Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

And may the blessing of God – the Father who created you – the Son who found you and saved you – and the Holy Spirit who lives and works within you – be with you and all whom you love and all for whom you pray, this day and for all eternity. **Amen.**