

2026 08 16 WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

And so the heat goes on.....and on! Perhaps it is true that we can have too much of a good thing and that, in the end, we long for a change. However, whatever faces us, I hope and pray that you will be able to cope. This week we read a longish passage whose two parts don't seem, at first sight, to have much to do with one another – but they do tie in once we look at them.

As always, I wish you every blessing, Margaret.

Call to worship:

Come with purpose into the presence of the living God.

Come to worship and be amazed to discover and learn new things.

Come, knowing that God welcomes us all with open arms.

We are here, Lord, ready to focus totally on you.

Help us to be brave enough to ask the questions that we would like to ask.

Help us to be open enough to hear your answer.

In our worship here, speak to us, Lord, for we are listening. Amen.

Lord God, as we come before you now, we open our hearts to you.

Help us to see that we can learn so much from others, even from those with whom we think we may not share much in common. Make us willing to stand out from the crowd, to hear your voice, and to act on it. Amen.

The words to 'There's a wideness in God's mercy' by Frederick William Faber [1814-1863]

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice which is more than liberty.

2 There is plentiful redemption in the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the Head.

3 There is grace enough for thousands of new worlds as great as this;
there is room for fresh creations in that upper home of bliss.

4 For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind;
and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

5 But we make his love too narrow by false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness with a zeal he will not own.

6 If our love were but more simple we should take him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined by the presence of our Lord.

Prayer

Living Lord, we praise you that you are a God who loves. You have given us a marvellous world to live in & to share with all your people. You love everyone equally, & we thank you that we are each unique, and that each of us can give & receive from each other & learn from each new experience. Amen.

Lord, sometimes we look as if we are listening to others – we may even make all the right noises! But we confess that our attention is often anywhere but where it should be.

Sometimes, too, we are distracted by our own concerns, caring only for ourselves, listening only to those who say what we want to hear.

Sometimes we don't listen to people because we don't like them – or maybe they are different from us. And sometimes our thoughts are unhelpful.

Sometimes we don't listen to you, Lord, because we are too busy – or maybe a bit frightened about what you might say to us.

Lord, forgive us for all the missed opportunities to truly hear. Amen.

Jesus, you came in love, showering us with goodness despite our wrongdoing.

You shed your blood to atone for our sins and reconciled us to the Father.

Through your loving grace and mercy, you freely bless us with forgiveness. 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.

Matthew 15: [10-20], 21-28 taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. used by permission.

[Jesus called the crowd to him and said: 'Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.'

Then the disciples came to him and asked: 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?'

He replied: 'Every plant that my Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit.'

Peter said: 'Explain the parable to us.'

'Are you still so dull?' Jesus asked them. 'Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.')

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out: 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.'

Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him: 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.'

He answered: 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.'

The woman came and knelt before him: 'Lord, help me!' she said.

He replied: 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.'

'Yes, it is, Lord,' she said. 'Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.'

Then Jesus said to her: 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.'

And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Comment: The scribes and the Pharisees at Gennesaret have treated Jesus with disdain, finding fault with his disregard of small Jewish customs such as ritual handwashing before meals. Eventually Jesus leaves that place and begins to travel through Gentile territories instead. Before long he is approached by one of the local Gentile women. She acknowledges Jesus by calling him 'Son of David' but also asks for him to heal her distressed daughter. Strangely, Jesus says nothing at first – perhaps waiting to see how the disciples will respond. Have they begun to understand that his compassion is limitless? Evidently, they still have more to learn because their response is to suggest that the Gentile woman be sent away. By contrast, the woman does understand the true extent of Jesus' ministry – she presses her case even when Jesus initially feigns indifference. Her faith not only satisfies Jesus, but it also impresses him! Her daughter is instantly healed.

Prayer: 'If love is the centre' by Marjorie Dobson. From 'Unravelling the Mysteries' copyright Stainer and Bell 2019]

People can be difficult! Sometimes our greatest problems are dealing with those who always seem to irritate, or even anger, us. In some circumstances, being tolerant, kind and forgiving can seem almost impossible.

If love is the centre of God's being and we are surrounded by that love, why is it that we find it so hard to love certain other people?

Is it a matter of overcoming prejudice? Jesus did that.

Is it a matter of disagreeing with the other person's lifestyle to a point of intolerance? Jesus didn't do that!

He may not have agreed with the behaviour, but he loved the person.

Is it that some people seem almost determined to make themselves unlovable? Jesus met a few people like that too, but it didn't prevent him from loving them.

Is it because too close to someone who makes our lives miserable? Jesus didn't always have an easy time with his closest friends, but.....!

Is it because we feel that we cannot forgive someone for their actions that have devastated our lives? This is the hardest one of all, yet Jesus in the throes of death forgave those who crucified him because he said they didn't know what they were doing.

We cannot be as perfect as Jesus, but we can follow his example as often as we feel it is possible, because we too are surrounded by the love of God, as he was.

Forgiving God, we find some things very hard to do – and loving certain people very difficult indeed; but please enfold us in your love and compassion, so that we may be given the strength to venture into loving people as Jesus did. Amen.

Close:

Let us continue to hold before God the things we care about deeply, asking for his Spirit's wisdom and guidance as we act and respond with generosity and love. Amen.

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