



St Columba's Bathgate and St Peter's Linlithgow



Rector: Rev Christine Barclay

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5th September 2021
Pentecost 15

DEAR FRIENDS, this Sunday's readings speak of the hope of healing to wholeness, something that so many of our brothers and sisters around the world today long for. I hope that the readings, prayers and reflection make a connection with you.

Collect

ALMIGHTY AND ETERNAL GOD, make us grow in faith, hope and charity: and that we may be worthy of your promises, cause us to love what you command; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Readings

Isaiah 50: 4 – 9
James 2: 1 – 10, 14 – 17
Mark 7: 24 – 37

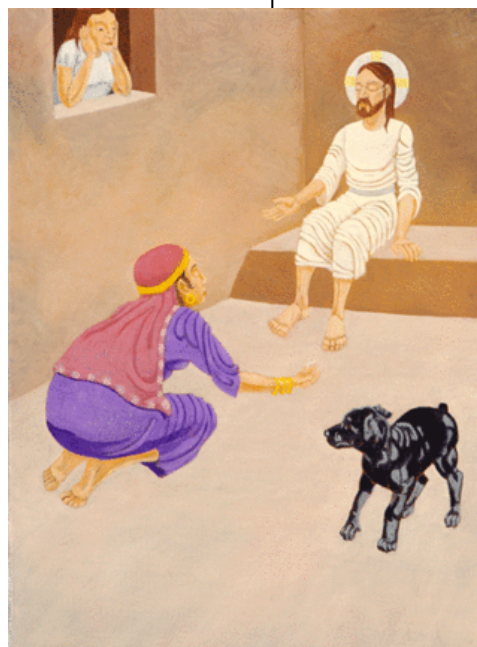
Reflection

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT prophecies describing a healing Messiah, we sense the huge waves of longing for the whole nation to be restored and to be beautiful in God's sight; full in vigorous health morally, physically and spiritually. Everything is pictured as bursting into new life and vitality through the direct touch of God's presence as we read in the passage from Isaiah 'See, your God comes with vengeance, with dread retribution he comes to save you. Then shall blind men's eyes be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.....' The reading from James picks up on the kind of healthy attitudes which are free from prejudice and discrimination, recognising that in the fullness of God our thinking is to be reworked until it reflects God's character, and we celebrate the triumph of mercy over judgement.

In the Gospel passage Jesus acts all of this out in person. He doesn't have to advertise his

presence so as to make events fit the promises of scripture; on the contrary, people drag their loved ones to him, begging Jesus to work God's healing in them. Even as he sighed, 'Ephphatha!' longing in love for the man's ears to be opened, it is as if he is longing for the ears of all the people of God to be opened in order that they may hear and understand. Immediately before the healing in our passage this morning, there was another healing which to our 21st century ears can, initially, sound offensive. It is a story to be read with insight. A woman asking for healing for her daughter who is both a Gentile and a foreigner and Jesus' response seems to totally against what we would expect from the Saviour of the world 'it is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs'. Dogs were not the well-beloved companions that they are today, more commonly they were a symbol of dishonour – to a Greek the word dog meant a shameless or audacious woman, to a Jew, equally a term of contempt. However, Jesus did not use the usual word to describe the wild dogs of the streets, rather he uses the one that described the little house lap-dog pets, thus taking the sting out of the word.

No doubt the tone of his voice would make a difference too. We can call someone 'an old rascal' in a voice of contempt or a voice of affection, Jesus will have taken all of the poison out of the word and he did not shut the door. Yes, the children must be fed first – Israel had the first offer of the gospel, but only the first; there were others still to come. In those days people did not have knives or forks or table napkins; they ate with their hands; they wiped their soiled hands on chunks of bread and then flung the bread away and the house-dogs ate it. The woman said 'I know the children are fed first, but can't I even get the scraps the children throw away'. Here was a sunny faith that would not take no for an



answer, here was a woman with the tragedy of an ill daughter at home who still has enough light in her heart to reply with a smile. Her faith was tested and her faith was real, and her prayer was answered.

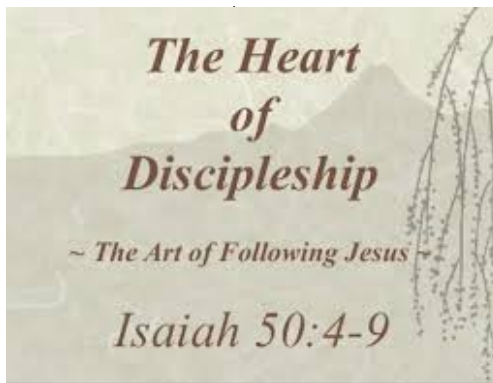
Symbolically, this woman stands for the Gentile world which so eagerly seized on the bread of heaven which the Jews rejected and threw away. When the gospel writer Mark urges his readers to follow Jesus, he envisages, not a boring life of conventional religion, but things happening that would make people astonished. If we are still too deaf to hear what he is saying, theologian Wright suggests 'the problem is perhaps with us rather than with the message'!

Prayers

Heavenly Father mindful of the words of the prophet Isaiah to be strong and fearless, bring our thoughts and prayers for our troubled world in faithful hope. Give your wisdom and heavenly grace to all those who serve your Church around the world. For our Scottish Episcopal Church, for our Primus Mark and Bishop John. For all who hold office within our diocese and churches and for all who minister in your name. Creator God we pray for our world leaders and for all the places of crisis around the globe, especially at this time for the people of Afghanistan, for all who have fled in fear and for those who remain. We pray for our own nation at this time of increased covid numbers and for the challenges this bring to all of our lives. Help us to live our lives to the full, spreading the warmth of your love with everyone we meet. Loving God, we pray for all who suffer in body mind or spirit, for your healing grace to be poured liberally upon them. We continue to keep Rev Ruth Innes in her prayers as she moves into retirement and we keep Bishop John's wife Clare in our prayers too, she was diagnosed with severe heart failure earlier this summer. A short stay in hospital has been followed with a period of convalescence and getting her medication right.

From St Columba's Jill Drysdale Wilson, Katrina Barron, Tom and Rose MacLaren, Brian Knotts, Lorna Aitken, Kath Stutt, Anthea and Katie McAlpin, Geoffrey Gerrard, Doug and Pat Lawrie, Young Harry and Paul and Janice Moffat.

And from St Peter's Pat and Jim Bryce, Gordon Dumayne, Anna Lovelock, Kathleen Rae (Anne's friend), Cisley Moss, Michael Patrick (Ruthie's friend), Peter and Marilyn McOwan, Harry and Connie Payne, Rita Manion (David's mother), Annie and Andy Gibb's (Olivia's in-laws), Bob Philip (Andy's father), Dot Pringle, Brenda Cook, Father John, Ruthie Caddell, David Szkudlarek, Jan Robson, and for all their families.



Merciful God we pray for all who are coming to the end of their journey here on earth and pray that they may come into your presence and kingdom. We pray for all those who have come before your face and now rejoice in the fullness of life eternal. And we remember those . connected with our church families whose anniversary of death falls at this time.

From St Columba's William Kirkland, Ian Irvine, Tracy Engh and Colin Westworth.

From St Peter's Margaret Nelson, Edmund Riley, Edith Beetham and Peggy Wood.

Faithful God, we thank you that your wisdom not only enlightens us but transforms us and guides us in our daily walk through life with you. Help us, as James advises, to always accompany our words of faith with deeds of action.

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.



Notices

This week has seen the turn of the calendar again and in our gardens and around the countryside we start to see the turning of the leaves as autumn sets in. A lovely time of year, even if it does herald the colder and shorter days. In church we continue to err on the side of caution ensuring that people feel safe and not having to sit too close to their neighbour especially as covid numbers are on the rise. Please do continue to get in touch with Jane – 843176 if you wish to attend Sunday worship in St Peter's as we are still limited to 22 available places.

Services of the coming week

Sunday 5th September – 15th Sunday after Pentecost

St Peter's @ 9.30am and St Columba's @ 11.15am.

Tuesday 7th – St Peter's midweek worship @ 10.30am

Wednesday 8th – St Columba's midweek worship @ 10.30am

St Peter's Sunday Morning IT Desk

Thank you to those who have stepped forward to become part of the rota, there is still room for more.....please do contact Peter Lewis for more information.

The latest edition of '**The Communicant**' (the Edinburgh diocesan news sheet) is available now on the Diocesan website, via this link: <https://>

Pastoral Visiting: If you would like me to come and visit, or if you know of someone who would appreciate a visit, please do let me know. Please be assured that I hold you all in my prayers each and every day.

SEC Morning, Evening and Night Prayer Liturgies

Morning, Evening and Night Prayer liturgies are available at www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices

Rev Christine will be saying Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer each day at home and invites you to join in from yours.

On Thursday mornings at 9am a virtual service will be shared via Zoom™. If you would like to join in, the link every week will be:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/756114372?pwd=ZXpMWndaY210empVY1daL09paGluZz09>
Meeting ID: 991 1810 8400 Passcode: 143983

For the coming week beginning on Pentecost 15 (Trinity 14). On Wednesday we celebrate The Birth of Mary, Mother of the Lord.

Sunday 5 th	Week D	Ezekiel 12:21 - 13:16	Acts 19:1-20	Mark 7:24-37
Monday 6 th	Week D	1 Kings 13:1-10	Philippians 1:1-11	Mark 15:40-47
Tuesday 7 th	Week D	1 Kings 16:23-34	Philippians 1:12-30	Mark 16:1-8, (9-20)
Wednesday 8 th	Week D	1 Kings 17:1-24	Philippians 2:1-11	Matthew 2:1-12
Thursday 9 th	Week D	1 Kings 18:1-19	Philippians 2:12-30	Matthew 2:13-23
Friday 10 th	Week D	1 Kings 18:20-40	Philippians 3:1-16	Matthew 3:1-12
Saturday 11 th	Week D	1 Kings 18:41 - 19:8	Philippians 3:17 - 4:7	Matthew 3:13-17

The Collect for the week Proper 23 Sunday between 4 and 10 September.

Almighty and eternal God, make us grow in faith, hope and charity: and that we may be worthy of your promises, cause us to love what you command; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Each day we pray for:

- The world: people, governments and leaders of the countries and specific issues arising in the news. Issues relating to social justice, peace, suffering and creation. And, of course, at this time for the devastating global covid-19 crisis.
- Our wider church, the SEC, our diocese, individual churches.
- Our community – residents in our area. For those with no faith, we pray for their introduction to the Christian faith, and for those with faith, that their faith may develop further.
- Those known to us who are unwell or in need.
- Our own church communities.

