



Order of Service

10 am



20th August 2023

Worship led by
Rev Dr André Groenewald

Musician
Martin Petty

Gathering of God's People

Time when we greet one another and prepare for worship.
Those who are able please stand for the entry of the Bible.
Words of welcome and announcements.

Good morning

Allow me a few announcements please:

I received an email from Sandra Lyall:

'It is hoped that Balerno Parish Church can once again help raise vital funds for Fresh Start by taking part in the Kilt Walk which takes place on Sunday, 17th September. If you would like to be part of Team Balerno, please speak to Sandra Lyall for further details. All money raised in sponsorship is match funded by 50% by the Hunter Foundation.'

Can I please remind you of the informal reflective supper and song evening worship services that will start on the first Sunday of September at 6:30 pm in the St Joseph's hall?

I would also like to inform you – for those who do not yet know – that Rev Easter Smart from Currie Kirk accepted a call to an American church. She will preach her last sermon on Sunday the 17th of September 2023.

The Guild dedication service will take place on the 10th of September 2023.

Worshipping God Together

Call to worship

Minister: May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine upon us, *Selah*,

**All: that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.**

Beloved I greet you in the Name of God the Father, the
Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

MP 315 I will sing the wondrous story.

Opening Prayer and The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray:

As we gather before you today, Lord God,
we remember that you are God of all;
so, we pray for wisdom and sensitivity
in hearing the voices of those on the margins of our
experience.

Lead us to hear with your ears and to follow your example,
As we seek to meet needs and foster harmony in your world.

Living God, we come to you
with our needs and our longings.
We come conscious of all the barriers
that stand in our way
– our own weakness and frailty,
our lack of courage,
our rejection by others.
We praise you that in Jesus
you meet us in our weakness,
give us new confidence and strength,
and welcome us whoever we are.
And so we come, trusting in your love,
and knowing that in you our faith is restored
and we are made whole.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

ALL: 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

**Choir sings SGP 2 “A new commandment that I give to you”
by N Warren**

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Matthew 15:21-28.

Reader: Margaret Forsyth.

Background to the reading.

In the past week I was once again reminded that context is everything, especially when people do not share/have the same context. At the chieftain rugby match yesterday in Melrose, one of the dads said to me: "So you are the disciple of Jesus in Balerno". It took me a minute to process what he was saying but then I realised, I have never been addressed as a disciple. I walked away thinking, wow, yes I am. BUT I was also thinking about the context in which he said it. He must have faith and know Jesus to say it.

I also conducted a funeral where the family is not living in Scotland, and how they said that the stories they heard from their aunt, made so much more sense every time they visited her.

Nanda and I also experienced it with her dad and aunt's visit to Scotland. They both said how much

they **now appreciate** everything we tell them about where we live and work, now that they have seen and experienced Scotland.

Our reading is no exception. Jesus went to the Gentile territory of the port cities Tyre and Sidon (today would be parts of **Lebanon and Syria**). The Jews did not respect/acknowledge/accept the Gentiles. In fact they would refer to them as “dogs” and regarded them as not welcome in the kingdom of God.

Now Jesus find himself on “unholy, unclean” soil talking to a Gentile woman. In their eyes it was a shameful thing to do! But Jesus did not care. And to make matters even more complicated, this woman was a Canaanite. The Canaanite’s were the most morally despised of Israel’s enemies in the OLD Testament! By now Matthew’s Jewish readers would be on edge.

Then Jesus goes one step further. He uses the old Jewish conversion formula to challenge the Jewish tradition. The Jewish conversion formula stated that Gentile woman could convert to Judaism since the time of Ruth. But in order to determine that their intentions were genuine they had to follow a strict procedure whereby they would go to the priest and asked to be included in Judaism. Three times they would be insulted and rejected and if they returned after the third time the priest would say: "Tradition has prevailed you are now allowed into the Jewish ways!"

In this case Jesus follows the formula with only one change. He treats her quite rude by ignoring her at first, then says he is only sent to the Jews and then refers to the fact that it is not right to give the children's bread to the dogs! She and everyone else knew that Jesus was referring to the practise whereby Gentiles were regarded as "dogs".

But she remained faithful and after the third time Jesus did not say tradition has prevailed, but faith has! Her faith in Him made her to return to Jesus. And because of her faith in Jesus as her Saviour, her daughter was healed.

The message: faith can move mountains! Faith can make the impossible possible! The Kingdom of God is for all people of faith...

CH4 557

O love that wilt not let me go.

Sermon

The text verse for the sermon: ²⁸ **Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.**

I do not think we can look at this text and not be touched by the raw emotions visible between the lines. I mean here is a woman who is desperately seeking help for her daughter who is seriously ill. I

can whole heartedly identify with her plea ... and I am sure you will all agree.

Many of us have experienced the same feeling when our children/grandchildren/great grandchildren are unwell. I can just imagine the woman in our reading's sorrow and need to find a cure for her daughter's illness. And then she heard of Jesus.

She confesses that He is Lord – the expected Messiah, the only one who can help her. But then Jesus acts like a typical Jewish priest rejecting her claims and ignoring her true needs. But because she has faith in Jesus as the Lord and Saviour, she continues to beg for mercy. Jesus is the only One to help and she just pressed on despite the insults. Most probably she must have heard of the strict rules of becoming a Jew. In this case she did not care about tradition, she just believed that

Jesus could help her. Even the fact that she is not of one the lost sheep of Israel could deter her. Not even the reference to her as a dog who take the bread of the children of Israel could stop her.

And then the miracle happens: Jesus looked at her and said her faith has saved her. And from that moment her daughter was healed.

Sometimes we want big miracles to happen to us to convince us of our faith in the Lord Jesus or His presence among us. BUT we do not need BIG miracles, do we? A miracle happens when we realize that God is present, when He changes situations for the better and according to His will and not necessarily what we would have wanted. A miracle happens when the unexpected occurs in our lives and we are left with only one explanation: it must have been God!

For God's miracles to happen, all we need is faith. Faith that there is no other hope than the hope we have in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Faith that we know that we can trust God – no matter what! Faith that can move mountains! Faith - in the One God who can make the impossible possible.

Faith - that God loves us just as we are. There are so many reasons why the Canaanite woman was not acceptable according to the Jews: she was a Canaanite, she was unclean and unholy, she was not a Jew meaning she was not part of God's covenant, she did not keep the commandments of the Law, she was in contact with illness or in their terms "evil spirits" and she was not residing in the Holy land. But Jesus loved her and had mercy on her situation. Jesus saw further than any human eyes could. He saw her heart!

And this is the power of God's love. He loves us and will keep pressing through His Holy Spirit to change our lives for the better. All we need is to believe and to hold on to His Hand. And if we believe in Him, believe in His Hope and love, then we will also reach out to the strangers, the sinners, the marginalized, and all those people whom we despise!

May we never be discouraged to go to the Lord Jesus when we need Him. May we never think of ourselves as unworthy in His eyes just because people labeled us that way.

May be that must be our answer to every human being we meet! Amen

Responding to God's Word

Prayer of dedication: Annabelle McCunn.

CH4 476

Mine eyes have seen the glory.

Blessing

Receive the blessing of God and go out in peace:

O God, you open your arms wide to all of us.

Help us trust that you really do love us,
the real deep-down us, warts and all.

Nothing we can do can stop you loving us.

If, like the Canaanite woman, we dare to believe,
may your healing love flow through us to the hurting,
so we may hear singing in heaven!

And the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit will
be with you, now and forever more.

Sung Amen. Amen, Amen

Please remain standing as The Bible is removed.



*You are invited to stay for tea and coffee which
are served in the hall.*

THANKS TO YOU...Thank you for all
your generous contributions towards the
ministry and mission of the Church. Gift

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Balerno Church of Scotland	

Aid envelopes are available at the end of each row or from the
Treasurer after the Service.

Please remember the Evening service on the 3rd of September 2023 at 6:30 pm in St Joseph's Hall. A light supper will be served with coffee, juice or tea.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Almighty God, from ancient times you have reminded your people to listen to the cries of those excluded or marginalised; and through Jesus you have expanded your people Israel to include us, with an invitation to all the world.

Thank you for your generous and caring nature. Help us to mirror it in our lives and actions, as we hear with your ears, see with your eyes, and love with your heart.

We praise you for your arms outstretched to save the lost, to include the excluded, to raise those the world despises. You are God of the outcast and stranger, welcoming all, making friends of foes.

Amen.