

August 16 2020
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*A liturgy for use at home. Please adapt it as you see fit. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

PREPARATION

Light a candle as you read these words

I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people,
his faithful servants (Ps 85:8).

Call to Worship

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
May the peoples praise you, O God;
May all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
(Psalm 67:1-5)

listen to or sing a song of praise

Prayer of Adoration¹

Praise be to you, O God,
The maker of the universe,
by whose wisdom we are created and
sustained.

Praise be to you, O God
The father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
By whose love we are redeemed and
forgiven.

Praise be to you, O God,

the source of all holiness,
By whose Spirit we are made whole and
brought to perfection.

Praise be to you, O God,
source of all being, internal word and the
holy spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and
shall be forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God,
We have sinned against you
in what we have thought, said and done.
We have not loved you with our whole
heart;
We have not loved our neighbours as
ourselves.
We are truly sorry
And turn away from what is wrong.
Forgive us for the sake of your son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save
sinners.

This is his gracious word: "your sins are
forgiven".

Amen. Thanks be to God

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Scripture

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8
Matthew 15:21-28

Collect

God of the nations,
to whose table all are invited
and in whose kingdom no one is a
stranger:
hear the cries of the hungry and mercifully
extend to all the peoples on earth
the joy of your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sermon

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes.*

¹ Worship Sourcebook

- *The Sunday Sermon is online*²

THE RESPONSE

- What do you think of the idea of “wrestling” in prayer?
- How does the story of the Canaanite woman challenge or inspire you?
- What part can you play so that DMC could become a people who “wrestle” in prayer to become a people through whom God brings abundant blessing.
- If you need help in prayer and meditation, and have a smartphone try the “Lecture365” app. I find it helpful.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs of our nation and church. Pray them as written or allow them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

For the unemployed

Lord God, creator of all things, you have made us in your own image so that we must ever seek our joy in creative work: have mercy on all who are unemployed or whose work is dull; help us so to order our common life that all may have work to do and find joy in doing it, for the good of the nation and the glory of your name.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Homeless and destitute

Lord God Almighty and merciful, you heal those who are broken in heart and you turn sadness into joy: remember in pity those who were destitute, homeless or forgotten. Uplift those who are cast down; cheer with hope all who are discouraged and unhappy; and raise up helpers for them in their time of need.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

All who minister to the sick

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ went about doing good and healing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people: continue his gracious work among us in hospitals and nursing homes; and send your blessing on all who labour to prevent suffering and to forward your purposes of love. We pray for doctors and healthcare workers of the DMC family, Bianca, Debbie, Karla, Glynnis, Gideon, Liza, Magda may you keep them safe and renew them each day by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

For union with Jesus in the Spirit

Lord Jesus, unite me to yourself both in spirit and in reality: by your patience with the wayward and your compassion for the suffering; by your hatred of sin and your love for sinners; by your perfect obedience to the Father, and by your strong humility; that your image may be restored in me to the glory of God the Father.

Our Father...

Dedication

Lord, I am willing to be made willing and desire with all my heart that your will should be done in me and through me, as perfectly as it is done in heaven. Come, take me and break me: I give myself to you in the dark and in the light; in life and in death; in sorrow and in joy, to be only yours, wholly and forever. Make the most of me that can be made for your glory. Amen

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

Benediction

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen

² <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

Great Faith

Some people say you can change God's mind – or at least change God's initial intention. They remind us of Moses when God planned to destroy the Israelites. Moses reasoned with God and the people were spared (Ex. 32:10ff). They recall the time Isaiah told King Hezekiah to get his affairs in order because his illness would end in death. Hezekiah turned to God, "weeping bitterly" he asked to be spared (2 Kings 20:1ff). Before Isaiah had left the palace, God sent him back to tell Hezekiah "*I have heard your prayer, I have seen you tears, I will heal you*".

What do you think of that? It seems insensitive talking about prayers that change God's intentions. So many are crying out with sighs and sobs or even screams^[1] and yet suffer bereavement and crushed dreams. Our Gospel lesson leads us to grapple with the idea of a God who can be "**prevailed upon**". I think we'll find the struggle a blessing.

Was Jesus "changed"

It appears that the Canaanite woman changed Jesus's intention. Jesus understood that God's mission, for him, was to the lost sheep of Israel. God had after all promised to bless the nations through Israel (Gen. 12). But the Canaanite woman wasn't taking no for an answer.

Some interpreters believe the Canaanite woman exposed Jesus' prejudice or racism because the Canaanites had been lifelong enemies of His people. They commend the woman for refusing to be belittled and challenge the Church to be transformed, as Jesus was.

The Canaanite woman is indeed to be commended, and Jesus does just that. However, I don't think Jesus had to learn how to be less prejudiced and hospitable. He is the Son of Man. The Lord. He needs no saving.

The way I read it, Jesus, is never ambivalent, never disinterested – whether one is rich, poor, Jew or gentile, clean or unclean. He'd just been teaching that evil intentions – "*murder, adultery, false witness, slander*" come from the heart (Mt. 15:19). He wants to know what's in *this* woman's heart. Or, more likely, he wants her to discover the depth of her own faith and for the disciples to see what's really in her. Remember, they are in the region of Sidon and Tyre, from whence came queen Jezebel (1 King 16:31), the personification evil, but also the widow of Zarephath (1 Ki 17:8ff), the personification of humble faith; what was in this woman's heart?

Jesus invites the woman into dialogue, offering her a riddle to solve. Admittedly that riddle "***It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs***" (Mt 15:26) is troubling. But the woman takes no offense. She responds "***Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table***" (Mt 15:27). Her riposte wins the challenge Jesus drew her into.

He says "*you win*"... otherwise translated: "*Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish*" and her daughter is instantly healed (Mt 15:28).

I don't think that Jesus needed her help to be a role model for all humanity. But her faith **is** great; she does serve as role model for all disciples:

- Her faith was great because she understood something of God's **purpose**: She called Jesus "*Son of David*". She has some idea that Jesus is king and that his

Jesus kingship would, ultimately, prevail over all nations. God's purpose is to draw all nations to himself through Jesus.

- Her faith is great because she understands God's **character**. God is compassionate and merciful. God's mercy is so abundant it spills off the table feeding those who don't yet enjoy the status of "God's children".
- But, most importantly, I think, she *gets* what it means to be **in relationship** with the God of Israel. Remember how Israel was named? Jacob wrestled all night with the angel of God. At daybreak the angel said *"Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome"* (Ge 32:28).

Faith, great faith, "wrestles" with God on the basis of what God has promised (to bless), who God is (merciful), what God can do (creator of heaven and earth). That's the faith in the living, God, *"of Israel"* and can emerge from any nation, any tribe, any culture, any denomination, any tradition!

Doesn't this make perfect sense for a God who wants to be **"Immanuel, God with us"**? Isn't this what loving parents long for – children to "wrestle" with them for what's good. Are we not secretly delighted when they argue and reason until we have to say **"yes"**? (If my teens listen, I may regret this statement!) When both my children were very young, they used to engage me in little "wrestling" matches. Obviously, Grace was a little (a lot) gentler than Benjamin. I think of this wrestling as a training ground for relationship. Dad has a will. Child has a will. Dad is stronger. But dad is not a brute. Wrestling becomes embrace. Wills merge. Prayer is a bit like that.

Does not something similar happen between husband and wife in the context of a loving marriage? Ok, disregard that, I might be embarrassed if we pursue that analogy.

Prayer

As people of faith we can "say our prayers" – morning and evening, entrusting all to God. That's good. Both the Church and the world would be blessed if we all did that.

But then there is prayer that takes hold of God and won't let go – on one's knees, crying out; *"Lord you have promised, this is who you are and I won't let go"*. That's "Great Faith". And God, in grace and mercy, has so ordained it that some things are only done, for individuals, families, churches and nations when we wrestle in prayer. Whether the fall of the Berlin wall, or the disintegration of Apartheid, or the dismantling and renewal of our current corrupt leadership – God is seeking wrestlers. For, *"without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him"* (Heb 11:6).

Let's Wrestle

Remember when WWE used to appear on daytime TV about a decade ago. My son loved it. Whenever he saw me shirtless, he'd say – *"You've got your wrestling skin on!"* He'd come flying at me. Friends, Jesus is God with us, God with skin on, wrestling skin. Let's wrestle.

Amen.

[1] This phrase "sighs, sobs or even screams" from the 24/7 prayer app, Lectio 365.