

Worship at Home

16th August 2026

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South Molton & Ringsash Methodist Circuit
Format and editing by the South Devon Circuit

Opening Prayer

Great and mighty is our God, who meets us in weakness; sure and strong is our God, who meets us in our fear.

Glory be to Jesus who stands shoulder to shoulder with those who are in pain, who opened his arms wide on the cross to hold all the hurts of the world.

God of mercy, forgive us if our words and actions have injured others.

God of mercy, forgive us if our silence and inaction have injured others.

God of mercy, forgive us if there have been times when we have kept our distance from those who suffer.

God of mercy, forgive us if we have spoken hollow words to those in pain, in order to comfort ourselves.

God of mercy, forgive us if we have failed to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with you.

God of mercy, forgive us and renew us; use our mistakes and our brokenness and help us to live in each moment and in every circumstance lives of gratitude and love. **Amen.**

*As we now place ourselves in your loving care, we join together and say the words that Jesus taught his disciples to pray: **Our Father...***

STF 11: Holy, holy, holy!

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! All saints adore thee,

casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and
sky, and sea; holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Reginald Heber (1781-1826).

Bible Reading: Matthew 15:21-28.

Message

This passage from Matthew is difficult for us to truly understand unless we put it in context. If we don't, Jesus' words can seem cruel and demeaning towards the Canaanite Woman he speaks to. Matthew's community is predominantly Jewish, that is, it is made up of those who have been formed within the rich tradition of thought forms and practices that have shaped their understanding of God and "God's will" for God's people.

Jesus for Matthew is a "new Moses" who has come not to abolish the Law or the prophets but to fulfil them. What we are seeing in Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman is just that. To our ears, what follows is appalling but to the faithful in Matthew's community, he reacts to the woman's request as they would expect of a rabbi in those days. She represents Israel's notorious ancient foe—the Canaanites. Traditional religious practices and prejudices, designed to guide Israel's relationship with "outsiders" and "enemies", would support Jesus' brusque dismissal of her desperate concern for her daughter.

First Jesus gives this Canaanite woman the silent treatment. Then the disciples get involved: "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." Then Jesus says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v 24) to emphasize his initial mission. It

only gets worse. When she comes kneeling before him, Jesus insults her saying "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs". Jews of Jesus' time would often refer to gentiles as dogs.

However, the Canaanite Woman is not deterred. She replies "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

What Jesus does next must have left his disciples completely speechless. Jesus said to this Canaanite lady, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

This encounter serves as a valuable teaching moment for the disciples, showing them that faith and humility are more important than ritual purity or social norms.

It is also a valuable lesson for all of us regarding faith, humility and grace. The Canaanite Woman is focused. She doesn't react angrily to Jesus' insult, but instead she is thinking of one thing and that is her daughter. Ultimately, it is her faith that speaks and Jesus hears it loud and clear.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus shows his love and grace poured out on people who are shunned by society. It is often the despised, the broken and the marginalized who have nowhere to turn but Christ. When you hit rock bottom, there is nowhere else to go but upwards and Jesus is there to pull us up out of the pit.

When I was working as a prison chaplain, one of our roles was to find churches for prisoners to attend on their release. Once found we would work with probation officers, church leaders and safeguarding officers as well as local police to ensure that attending worship was done safely. On release it is a prisoner's human right to be able to attend a place of worship and yet repeatedly we would speak to church leaders who told us that they didn't want ex-offenders in their churches. That rejection of those who had served their sentence and had faith, often newly found faith, saddened me every time. At a point in their lives where they needed tremendous support the church said no. I am truly thankful that Jesus never does, whoever we are or whatever we

have done. Christ meets us where we are and I pray that I always see myself as a saved sinner because of God's amazing grace and nothing I can boast about of my own doing.

STF 440: Amazing Grace...

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound) that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

God's grace has taught my heart to fear, his grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come: God's grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures; he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

And when this heart and flesh shall fail, and mortal life shall cease: I shall possess, within the veil, a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun

John Newton. (1725-1807).

Prayers of Intercession

God of all creation, you hold the depths of the earth in your hands; you are closer to us than the air we breathe. Fill our souls with your wonderful love and light.

Give us strength and courage to reflect that love and light in the world.

Let us never shrink back from who we are in you or hide our light inside ourselves. Renew in us a sense of joy, painting the dark shadows around us with your light, your love and your salvation.

Hear us today as we pray for a world too often darkened by hatred, evil, power and greed. Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of power and might, your broken world cries out from the depths, a world dominated by the darkness of war, terror, pain and suffering.

We think of the on-going and deepening conflict in [Syria and the middle East...]

We share the pain and anguish of those who have had to flee from their homes, countries and livelihoods, who risk their lives, desperate for a new start free from fear and war.

May they see your light, feel your strength and power and know the truth of your promise that we shall not be overcome by the dark shadows of life or the darkness of human nature.

Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of compassion and grace, we share with you our love and concern for people in a dark place today.

We have on our hearts the friends and loved ones of the victims of violence and hatred.

We pray that they will find your strength in the compassion and love of those around them.

We pray for tolerance in our society. We pray for all Muslims suffering from Anti-Islamic hate crimes.

Let your light shine through the darkness of all their pain and their suffering.

Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of life, we ask for your healing power on those who are enduring pain and illness.

We especially think of those we name quietly in our hearts.

We share the grief of people close to us, who've recently lost loved ones.

We remember that as we weep with the grieving, your everlasting light shines with us, in moments of great sadness and great joy.

Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

God of love and hope, renew in us a deeper sense of who we are in you.

Help us to be aware of your presence each and every day.

Make us instruments of love and praise.

May our words, actions and lives be living examples of your forgiving, healing, life-giving love.

Within our darkest night, **Let your light shine.**

Amen.

**STF 416:. There's a wideness in God's mercy
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.**

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

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.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of man's mind; and the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind.

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.

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.

Frederick William Faber (1814-1863)

Blessing

We ask that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that we may know him better.

We pray that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which he has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. **Amen**

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