

**St. Margaret's Uniting Church
Mooroolbark**

Sunday 1st July, 2018

6th Sunday after Pentecost – Holy Communion

Welcome

All are invited to share morning tea following the service

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD:

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all ... **and also with you.**

WE SING 'Praise with joy the world's Creator' (TIS 179)

CALL TO WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER

WE LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD:

SHARING THE EARLY WORD

WE SING 'I know someone who watches over me' (TIS 662)

THE GOSPEL Mark 5:21-43 *A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed*

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent

all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?" ' He looked all round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

... for the word of the Lord, **THANKS BE TO GOD.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURES

I wonder if you've seen folk around the place wearing beanies to raise awareness of Motor Neurone Disease? A couple of weeks ago, on the

Queen's birthday holiday, all the AFL football coaches slid down a slide and into a pool of freezing water in aid of 'putting a freeze' on MND. One of football's greats, Neale Daniher has this particular disease, a reminder that there are many things we are powerless to prevent.

Yesterday I was keenly aware of this in a different way. I had the privilege of spending time with a number of refugees at Healesville Sanctuary, on a day trip with the Lentara Asylum Seeker Centre, supported by the Uniting Church in the Yarra Valley. It was a delightful day that masked a more serious reality. Those who are refugees are powerless against forces that threaten basic rights and existence. Many people flee dangerous places in far off countries and risk their lives, because they have no hope in staying, and the slightest chance through fleeing. After saying goodbye to our new friends, the news last night reports another 100 refugees have drowned off the coast of Libya.

I wonder what Jesus might have done if confronted with the massive human flow of displaced people around the globe. I wonder what his response might be to the European Union who has a new fledgling agreement about processing people before they get on boats. I wonder what Jesus might say about the Australian approach to preventing boat movements...

While we can imagine into that space, we don't need to imagine the plight of an older woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, and a twelve-year-old girl whose life was ending too soon. The older woman is desperate enough to prevent Jesus from a timely response towards the young girl. This older woman has been bled dry by doctors who perhaps have taken advantage of her, or at best been powerless against her condition. And for the life-span of the girl, this older one has been isolated through the curse of being ritually unclean. This means she is displaced from normal human contact, and unable to gather in community for something as basic as worshipping God.

We get an insight into how desperate she is by her actions. While she doesn't need to escape country via boat like many refugees, she flees isolation by flaunting law and dignity. As she pushes her way among the

crowd gathered around Jesus, who knows how many she repulses through her condition. Who knows how many know about her? Who knows what it means to forge on in any case?

She manages to touch Jesus and her bleeding suddenly stops. And perhaps we wonder as it pricks our hopes and dreams to be well in our own difficult circumstances:

Folk famous or ordinary with MND ...

Those who flee war or terror and whose families are torn apart ...

Those whose diagnosis is terminal and the impact it has on loved ones ...

Those whose mental health battles isolate and alienate them ...

Those who cannot shake the stigma of prison or other things ...

Jesus feels that power has been drawn out of him. And he demands to know why. I feel for the woman who must think about the consequences. A man, a great man has been touched by her stigma. Can she confess she has transgressed the purity laws? Can she slip away incognito? Will she face his anger if she puts up her hand? Why not quit while she can now that the bleeding has stopped?

I wonder what the insistence of Jesus might mean for you. Could we prevent his gaze or fall away from his demand to meet?

She confesses.

And she is made well a second time. This time it is the wellness of compassion and love. It is more than taking power. She receives blessing. Jesus says, *go in peace, and be healed of your disease*. What disease is this? Is it isolation? Is it scorn? What healing comes from compassion of the master?

Jesus' compassion in this moment comes at a cost. Word comes that the young girl has lost her battle with life. We are left wondering if it might have been different if Jesus had not been distracted. And yet that is what compassion does. It attends to what is before it. It is distractible by nature, or rather it calls into focus the very real and present need of our neighbour.

Were you there, Jesus says, when I was hungry and needed something to eat? Were you there when I was naked and needed clothes? Were you there when I was a stranger and needed to be invited in? Were you there?

I worry at times that ideology or political views or prejudices taint how we understand our call as people of God. We are in danger of meeting the older woman and believing it is the public health care system that will see to her needs. We are in danger of hearing about those drowned entering Libya and somehow blaming them for wanting to leave wherever they came from. We hear stories about those on Manus Island and believe that they have done terrible things to be sent there. And sometimes it takes a good Samaritan, someone from the outside, to shock us and remind us that the love of God and compassion of Jesus Christ belongs to us all.

Henri Nouwen says: *Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears.*

Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means the full immersion in the condition of being human. (from A reflection on the Christian Life, p 4)

Jesus finds that compassion interrupts him from seeing the young girl before she dies. But that doesn't stop him from completing his journey. Compassion yet drives him to care for her and her family, despite that all now seems lost.

And in a moment of intimate care, Jesus takes the young one by the hand and says, 'Talitha cum'. Little girl, it is time to rise up.

Uniting Church Biblical Scholar, Rev. Bill Loader comments, *The girl, who has since died, is raised. And was not that also a resurrection, the healing of the women?*

You see, that's what compassion does. It looks out for the hungry, the naked, the sick, those in prison, those dead through life's circumstances, those who do not belong because of what has happened to them – and it raises them into healing and life-giving places.

And while we cannot typically change the plight of those whose life is fading away, we can make sure the second healing of Jesus is enacted through our love, care and compassion. As we meet those who struggle, we can share with them the love of God shown through Jesus. In this we can bless and bring peace to a hurting world.

As Henri Nouwen reminds us, *compassion is not in the first instance about solving anything, rather the gift of compassion is the ability to enter into solidarity with those who suffer, and to be their companion.*

How will the compassion of Jesus Christ shape your response to those who are refugees within our community? How will compassion shape the way you hear or tell their stories? How will compassion move your care for those near you who are sick, or hungry or in prison?

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD:

OFFERING

During the offering WE SING 'O Christ the healer' (TIS 638)

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION:

QUESTIONS OF INSTITUTION

What is this meal of bread and wine?

Why do we eat bread?! !!

What does the wine help us remember?

... Your presence in a loaf of bread.

Your presence in a simple cup.

Remember me, Jesus said,
and we remember.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

... The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving continues, all singing:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed, is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

INVOCATION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

WE SING 'Come, Word already here' (*Words: Jennie Gordon, Tune: ST JOHN*)

BREAKING THE BREAD

... Let us receive what we are;
Let us become what we receive.

The body of Christ.

THE COMMUNION

THE PEACE

The peace of Jesus Christ always be with you. ...
and also with you.

SHARING FROM THE CHILDREN

SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD:

WE SING TIS 665 'Jesus Christ is waiting'

SENDING OUT & BLESSING

SENDING OUT SONG 'Jesus Christ is waiting' *(cont.)*