

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, September 5th, 2021
Pastor Gerry Gallant

Welcome & Announcements

Call to Worship (Responsive)

One: Put your confidence in God.

All: Those who have God as their helper will rejoice.

One: God gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry.

All: God frees the prisoners and opens the eyes of the blind.

One: So, put your trust in God's goodness.

All: Let God's reign endure forever! Let us worship God.

Prayer of Invocation

Almighty God,

We are in awe of your magnificent power displayed through the entire universe, for through you all things were made and all things have their being. We come before you with grateful thanks and with hearts that long to adore you and worship only you.

Lord, may we know the presence of the Holy Spirit here with us today. May we be open to your leading, sensitive to you speaking and alert to your calling. Father, we invite the same power that was at work when Jesus was raised from the grave to be present with us here now. Lord, we declare that you are welcome here amongst us.

Amen

Opening Hymn: Hymn 671 *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest.
Lay down, O weary one,
lay down your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn, and sad.
I found in him a resting place,
and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one;
stoop down and drink and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream.

My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“I am the dawning light.
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright.”
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun,
and in that light of life I’ll walk
till trav’ling days are done.

Call to Confession

Eternal God, first and last, our beginning and our end,
beside you there is nothing or no one greater.
You gave breath to all living things.
By your Spirit, you are among us still, breathing new life,
turning anger into reconciliation,
division into unity,
grief into consolation.
Through your grace, you open up new directions and new possibilities
for the world you love.
So, we offer you our lives and our labours in worship and in service,
joining in creation’s song of praise and adoration:
Holy, holy, holy are you, O God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession (All Together)

**God of mercy,
We know you judge the world with an eye for the poor and outcast.
We confess we fail to live with the same intent in our lives
We have been silent when we should have spoken up,
We have been uncaring in the face of injustice.
We have not shown the same generosity to others that you have shown us.
Forgive us for putting ourselves first,
and help us to serve you with the kindness we meet in Jesus Christ.
Amen**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ—
and Christ died for us; Christ rose for us; Christ reigns in power for us; Believe the good news of
the gospel.
All who are in Jesus Christ, are forgiven and set free through God’s generous grace.

The Lords Prayer

**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 the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.
Children's Lesson**

Responsive Reading (Psalm 146)

146 Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD, O my soul!

**2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.**

3 Put not your trust in princes,
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

**4 When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;
on that very day his plans perish.**

5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD his God,

**6 who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
who keeps faith forever;**

7 who executes justice for the oppressed,
who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free;

**8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;**

the LORD loves the righteous.

9 The LORD watches over the sojourners;
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

**10 The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!**

Music Ministry *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised Thou wilt all our burdens bear
May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright unclouded there will be no need for prayer
Rapture, praise and endless worship will be our sweet portion there.

Scripture

Mark 7:24–30 ESV

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

Hymn Before Sermon 774 God Forgave My Sin/Freely Freely

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his love as he told me to.

He said:
'Freely, freely you have received;
freely, freely give.
Go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'

All power is given in Jesus' name,
in earth and heaven in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.

He said:
'Freely, freely you have received;
freely, freely give.
Go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'

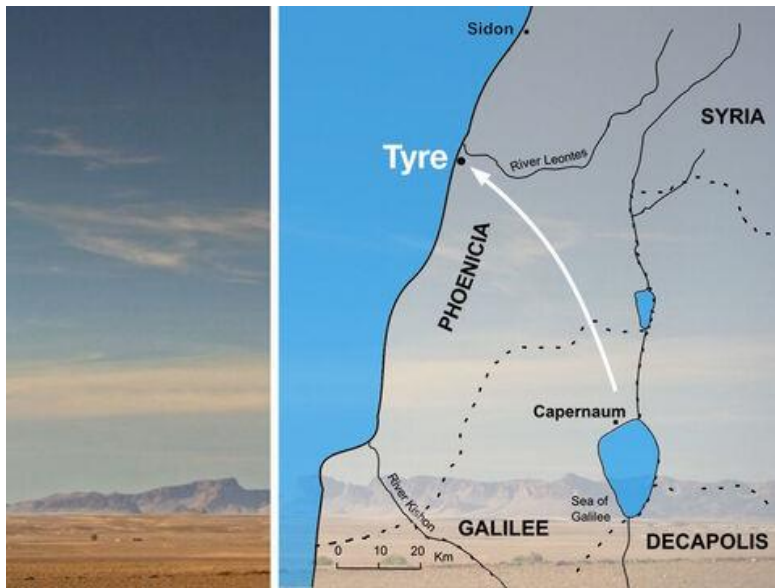
Prayer for illumination

Gracious God, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit.
As the scriptures are read and interpreted, may we hear what you are saying to the church today,
and find the courage to follow your will. **Amen.**

Sermon

Do you ever wonder what it means to have great faith? What it means to place all of your trust in the Lord? Do you ever envy others whom you think have more faith than you or appear to be better Christians than you are??

The scripture we have read today is one of the greatest stories of perseverance and faith in the New Testament. A story which can be easily misunderstand, one where we can easily focus on the wrong things when we try to understand what is happening using our own knowledge and without understanding the context of the scripture.



It starts by telling us that Jesus has moved out of the region of Galilee into the region near Tyre and Sidon, roughly 20 miles northwest of where he had been active up until now. We are not told why he has left Galilee into this region, a region that was distinctly gentile. We can assume that Jesus moved into this region not because of an opportunity to bring his message to the gentiles because he has been primarily focused on bringing the message of salvation to his fellow Jews. In fact, the region he had gone into was known for its bitter rivalry with Israel.

The region of Tyre had been the home of Jezebel, who in the days of the prophet Elijah had led the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom astray in worship of Baal. During the Maccabean revolt of the second century BC, they had been allies with the Seleucid against the Jews. The Prophet Ezekiel and Zechariah spoke of the terror of Tyre and of its great wealth and power in the region. Even the great Jewish historian Josephus stated that Tyre was ‘notoriously our bitterest enemies’, and it was a region known for its adherent worship of pagan idols.

For those who are curious, this region is now the modern-day Lebanon. A region in which there is still animosity between Jews and gentiles. That animosity that Josephus spoke about 2000 years ago still exists today. So why would the messiah of the Jews enter this region? What possible purpose could he have to go somewhere where he would be among those who held him in disdain.

We are led to assume that he has gone to Tyre and Sidon to seek some rest, to hide. In fact, we are told that he entered into a house where he did not want to be known. Maybe he had gone into this region, not to proclaim his message but to gain refuge from the crowds that had constantly been pushing in upon him, seeking his teaching, his guidance, and his healing. Or perhaps to seek refuge from the constant testing of the Jewish religious leaders who were constantly trying to find fault in him so they could cast doubt among his followers and regain their power. Yet even here among the most pagan society of the world of the time, Jesus could not remain hidden.

Instead, a Syrophenician woman seeks him out while seeks refuge. She seeks him out and supplicates herself before him. She gets down on her knees before Jesus and begs for him to heal her daughter whom she says is demon possessed.

This is not the first time Jesus has seen a parent supplicate themselves before him for the sake of a child who is ill. Earlier in the book of Mark we see a very different person at the feet of Jesus begging for his healing for their child. In Chapter 5 we are presented the picture of Jarius, the ruler of a Jewish synagogue, bow down before Jesus and beg for the life of his child.



What makes this unique is that this woman has everything against her from the Jewish perspective of the time; she is a woman approaching a man who is not known to her, on top of that she is a Greek Gentile, and to make it even worse she is from the most pagan nation known being a Syrophenician by birth. And even if we were to remove all of these factors; she is seeking Jesus out and asking of him when he is seeking rest and to remain hidden.

Yet this woman's faith shone past all of the reasons that she should not approach Jesus and brought her before him to seek healing for her daughter. She falls at his feet and begs for him to cast the demon out of her daughter, not knowing what response she will get from a man who owes her nothing.

And this is the first lesson we can take from this piece of scripture. This Syrophenician woman went before God and humbled herself, not for herself, but for another whom she loved. We are all called to prayerfully go before the Lord to not only pray for ourselves but for those around us, even those who are not Christian. Furthermore, she doesn't just do it once and then give up. In the book of Matthew in the parallel scripture we see that she was persistent in asking for Jesus to heal her daughter.

Matthew 15:22–23 ESV

22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." 23 But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us."

She didn't just ask once and then wander away when she did not receive what she asked for, instead she persisted in her request. She sought to find healing for her daughter in the only place she knew it could be found, and that gave her the faith and perseverance to continue to ask Jesus to heal her daughter.

Can we all claim the same or do we easily give up on prayer? How many of us promise to pray for someone or something, then maybe we do it a couple times and after that we forget. How many of us say we will pray for someone or something and then never actually do?

We all need to take note of this woman's perseverance and faith and begin to incorporate it into our own prayer lives.

We see in the next section her perseverance in her request, because Jesus does not hear her here once and then heal her daughter. Truthfully, Jesus's response to this woman is often one that is misused by some to argue that Jesus was not perfect, instead he was flawed like all humans. However, this is because those who choose to interpret God's word in this way are looking at it through their own lenses instead of letting the scripture guide them.

Mark 7:27 ESV

27 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."



Jesus calls this woman a dog. He tells her that it is wrong to take bread from the table and toss it to the dogs. It should be clear in this case that the children are the people of Israel, and the dogs are the gentiles. Jesus is explaining that he has been called to bring his ministry to the people of Israel, not to the gentiles.

Even knowing this being called a dog was a serious insult. It implied that one was unkept and lacked intelligence. This spoke of the street dogs that roamed in packs and ripped open the garbage.

We are warned of these dogs in Matthew 7:6 which is part of the sermon on the mount.

Matthew 7:6 ESV

6 "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you."

And again, in Philippians 3:2

Philippians 3:2 ESV

2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

This is how many of the Jewish people referred to the gentiles of the time. However, there are two forms of the word in Greek, one that meant the savage beasts that wandered the streets as strays and the other that meant the dog that was kept in the household as a pet and for its service.

These dogs are domesticated much like the dogs many of us have today. I am sure many of you have or have had a dog at some point in your life. I have two dogs myself.

When Jesus speaks of the dogs here imagine that he is speaking of these dogs. I love my dogs, but I would never take the food away from my children and give to the dogs first. I am sure no one here would take the Christmas turkey out of the oven and then give it to the dogs first before they fed their family.

However, I am also fairly confident, that even though we are all aware that table food is not the healthiest for our pets, we always have given them a portion of the food that was shared with our families. My father is looking after my dogs right now and Last Sunday, I watched him sneak a portion of the turkey roast we had to the dogs and then not even thirty minutes later my wife did the same thing. Trust me those dogs were well fed.

This was very much the way the household dogs were fed at this time. Once the family was fed, they could feed upon the scraps. Or like many of the dogs we have in our homes, they acted like a vacuum cleaner and whisked away the food that dropped to the floor.

So, while it was an insult it was also an opportunity. Jesus was telling the woman that it was wrong for him to give himself, the bread of life to those who were not in the household of the Kingdom of Israel. For he was sent to those that belonged to Israel alone.

Jesus called this woman a dog, and many people in the world get very angry at his words. How could he be so misogynistic, so racist. How could he speak so rudely to this mother? People do this because they do not understand the context of the language. We need to remember that scripture should always be looked at through 4 different lenses.

1. How does it relate to Jesus or the life of the writer?
2. Is there more than one translation or version of the story?
3. What did it mean to the original hearers of the story?
4. Use Scripture to interpret Scripture.

In this case we can remove the idea of a mistranslation. Both the version in Matthew and in Mark clearly have Jesus calling the woman a dog. In this case we need to focus on the fourth lens, using scripture to interpret scripture.

We were not present during this dialogue. We cannot look at the body language of Jesus, nor can we hear his inflection and intonation. We cannot look into the eyes of everyone present and determine what is happening. Instead, we need to focus on the woman's response to Jesus to get a true understanding of the scripture. Using scripture to interpret scripture and not our own perception of what is going on based on our own beliefs and personal bias.

The woman does not rebuke Jesus, nor does she walk away. She doesn't get angry or cry. She does not call upon those around Jesus to chastise him for his tone or his choice of words. She does not gather people together to 'cancel' Jesus as many people would have done if he spoke these words to a woman on the street today.

Instead, the woman seized upon his choice of words and replied.

Mark 7:28 ESV

28 But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”



The woman accepts the position as a dog at the table and then lays claim to the crumbs that fall from the table. For this woman, the most important thing is her faith in the fact that Jesus will heal her daughter. That is all that she is focused upon. She is not upset at being called a dog, she knows she is not an Israelite and lays no claim to his grace and mercy, she knows she is not a child of God and therefore she does not deserve the right to take food away from the children. Instead, she is happy with the crumbs that fall away from the table.

This woman accepts her position and instead of standing tall she humbles herself before Him. This is a common theme in the Bible, almost all who come before God humble themselves and recognize that they are undeserving of the grace and mercy.

Jesus sees the heart of this woman, that she clearly has faith and is true in her intentions grants her request.

Like the woman we need to understand the importance of knowing we are all sinners and that we are saved by the grace and mercy of God. No human is deserving of salvation, that is the truth, we are all motivated by our own desires and tempted by our sinful nature. We are all corrupted by those things which make us unholy and like the woman we need to come to God and ask for his mercy and his help.

The woman’s focus was on Jesus alone and she placed all of her hope and trust in him. She could have walked away when Jesus and the disciples ignored her, but she persisted. She could have walked away when she was insulted, but she persisted. In this world we will be ignored we will be insulted; we may even be persecuted but like this woman we need to endure and persevere in our focus on Jesus.

The driving force behind the woman’s behavior was love. She may not have been of the nation of Israel, but her love for her daughter was so strong that she was willing to be rebuked and insulted. This echoes the love that God has for his children. We also need to have this love and compassion for those around us both Christian and non-Christian.

The woman had faith. She approached Jesus in a sense of awe and reverence. He was more than a man to her, and she knew he had power beyond that of anyone she could ever know. We also need to approach our god with reverence and awe. Many of us today treat Christianity today as the pharisees did as a practice and process instead of having faith in God.

She worshiped him. The woman knelt before him, she called him lord and she prayed for her need. We are called to praise and worship our God, weekly through our service, yet how many do this because of adherence to man's rules instead of desire to please God.

The woman had perseverance. She would not give up. She came to Jesus as her last hope and because of that she refused to be sent away. She knew that her only chance was in him. She was not following a ritual, or performing a ceremony, she was coming to God with her heart fully exposed.

Finally, even in the midst of everything that was happening she had a positive outlook. Even though she knew that her child was ill she knew that God could heal her. She was filled with hope and perseverance, and this allowed her to respond to Jesus in such a way that He recognizes her faith in her time of trouble.

And it is for this reason that he grants her request

Mark 7:29–30 ESV

29 And he said to her, “For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.” 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.



Notice that she does not question the healing. She accepts that it has occurred. She does not ask him to come to her home and ensure her daughter is healed. She simply lays her needs before God and trusts in him to do what it is that he chooses to do.

This story shows the importance of reading the scripture regularly and going beyond a simple quote you may see thrown up on a post on social media. The importance of studying the bible with the correct lens.

Like this Syrophenician woman God wants to see our Faith. True faith in him as our lord and savior. God wants to see our love for God and for fellow humans, love that comes from our relationship with our God. He wants to see our reverence and praise and worship of him. He wants us to come to him with an understanding that he is all that matters in our lives. God wants us to place all of our hope and trust in Him.

God is calling for all of us to come to him and to focus on Jesus every day of our lives in everything we do, to live a life filled with great faith

Hymn: Here Is Love

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
loving-kindness as the flood,
when the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten
throughout heav'n's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion
fountains opened deep and wide;
through the floodgates of God's mercy
flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
poured incessant from above,
and heav'n's peace and perfect justice
kissed a guilty world in love.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
by Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
and Thy grace my need is meeting
as I trust in Thee, my Lord.
Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring
Thy great love and pow'r on me
without measure, full and boundless,
drawing out my heart to Thee.

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer. E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

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The Book of Proverbs declares that those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor. We do not bring bread today, but we offer a portion of God's gifts to us. May our gifts and our labours, whether paid or volunteered, meet the needs of those who often go without.

Offertory Prayer

Generous God, you call us to reach out to those in need in kindness rather than judgment, and with generosity, not just good intentions. Bless our gifts and our actions for Christ's sake, that our faith in his love will show in our actions through the church that bears his name.

Pastoral Prayer

O God in whom we live and move and have our being:
We come to you in prayer as the summer season draws nearer to its close:
We give you thanks for the occasions we have enjoyed
to catch up with family and friends;
to travel for recreation and restoration and let our worries go.
We are grateful for each moment to savour the beauty of creation.
Refresh us for the season ahead we pray,
and renew our commitment to serve you.
O God, Jesus faced many demands wherever he went,
and pressure from critics, whatever he did.
We pray for all those who have not found rest this summer:
for those whose work is stressful, exhausting, or unappreciated;
for those whose livelihoods remain uncertain,
because of the pandemic or through disasters caused by heat, fire, or storm.
We pray for those which hard choices to make,
about work or school or what comes next,
about relationships and priorities,
or about social policy and community leadership.
May they know your strength and guidance day by day.
Today we remember those for whom this summer has been filled with suffering:
We pray for those who have lost loved ones,
and those facing an uncertain future or a difficult diagnosis.
We pray for those who have lost their homes, for whatever reason,

We pray for all those who join efforts to relieve suffering of any kind.
May each one find courage to face tomorrow in your company.
O God, we need the embrace of your presence,
As we prepare to leave this service, walk with us,
and show us how to live each day as those who follow Jesus,
in whose name we pray
Amen.

Closing Hymn: 238 Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand,
the shadow of a mighty rock
within a weary land,
a home with in the wilderness,
a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat
and the burden of the day.

Upon the cross of Jesus
mine eyes at times can see
the very dying form of one
who suffered there for me,
and from my stricken heart with tears
two wonders I confess:
the wonders of redeeming love
and my own unworthiness.

I take, O cross, thy shadow
for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than
the sunshine of his face;
content to let the world go by,
to know no gain nor loss;
my sinful self my only shame,
my glory all, the cross.

Benediction

May the love of the Father enfold us,
the wisdom of the Son enlighten us,
the fire of the Spirit inflame us;
and may the blessing of the triune God rest on us,
and abide with us, now and evermore.