

**The Vine at Home**  
**23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B**  
**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**Call to worship**

Let us pray.

As we start our new Connexional year, O Lord,

May your priorities be ours  
May your values be ours  
May your challenges be ours,  
May your love be ours

That we might dedicate this year to you and your service. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

**Hymn: 255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy -**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-PaZbwyy4g>

**Opening Prayers**

In January, at the start of a new year, we look back and we look forward.

We think back over the year that has passed, all that took place, the good and the bad.  
We think ahead to the year yet to come, make resolutions of how things will be different,  
and make fresh starts.

Today, on the first Sunday of a new Connexional year,  
We do the same.

So we praise God:

For all in the last year that brought joy,  
For all moments when we felt close to God,

For times we glimpsed God working in our world,  
For opportunities seized and new initiatives started.

We take time, in silence, to bring before God all from the last year for which we give thanks  
and praise.

*Silence*

Thank you Lord, that as the mountains surround Jerusalem, you surround your people  
forever more.

But we also recognize that there were times in the last year that we lament,  
both things that happened to us or around us, and our own behaviours and attitudes.

So we bring before God:

The times when our actions did not glorify you,  
The words we said that were harmful or unnecessary,

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<sup>1</sup> Call to Worship written by Melissa Quinn

All in the last year that cause pain and anguish to ourselves or others,  
Opportunities wasted and moments lost.

We take time, in silence, to bring before God  
all from the last year for which we ask forgiveness and lament.

*Silence*

Thank you Lord, that as the mountains surround Jerusalem, you surround your people  
forever more.

Lord hear our thanksgiving and praise, our confessions and lamentations,  
and help us to hear your forgiveness and start afresh.

In the year that is to come:

May we experience joy and bring joy to others,  
May we feel your presence close to us,  
May we glimpse you at work in our world,  
May we seize opportunities to show your love to others.

May our actions glorify you  
May our words talk of your love,  
May we speak into the pain and anguish of others,

And may we trust in you to be beside us in ours.

Lord we give to you the year that is passed, and the year that is to come,  
and offer it to you.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.<sup>2</sup>

**Let us now say the Lord's Prayer**

**Readings: Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23**

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold.

<sup>2</sup> The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.

<sup>8</sup> Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail.

<sup>9</sup> Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.

<sup>22</sup> Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate;

<sup>23</sup> for the Lord pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them.

**James 2:1-10, 14-17 - Warning against Partiality**

**2** My brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?<sup>[b]</sup> **2** For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, **3** and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet,"<sup>[c]</sup> **4** have you not made distinctions among

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<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Melissa Quinn

yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? **5** Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.<sup>[a]</sup> Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? **6** But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? **7** Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

**8** You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” **9** But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

### **Faith without Works Is Dead**

**14** What good is it, my brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? **15** If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? **17** So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

### **Mark 7:24-37 - The Syrophenician Woman’s Faith**

**24** From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre.<sup>[a]</sup> He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, **25** but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. **26** Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. **27** He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” **28** But she answered him, “Sir,<sup>[b]</sup> even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” **29** Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” **30** So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

### **Jesus Cures a Deaf Man**

**31** Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. **32** They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. **33** He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. **34** Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” **35** And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. **36** Then Jesus<sup>[c]</sup> ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. **37** They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

### **Reflections on the reading**

*To read the full reflection for today, written by Jill Baker, find out if your circuit is subscribed to The Vine by emailing [thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk](mailto:thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk)*

For our time of reflection, make space to bring our answers to a question Jill Baker poses in her longer piece for The Vine this week. Jill writes:

Has anyone ever said to you, 'I wish I had your faith'? How did that make you feel? Or perhaps you have looked at someone else in the church, or online, or on Songs of Praise and thought to yourself, 'If only I had faith like that'?

For the next few minutes, let's discuss stories like these, and how your attitude to 'faith' is changed by reflecting on today's readings, perhaps in particular thinking about the syrophenician woman and her interaction with Jesus.

*[Discussion in groups or as a whole congregation].*

Let us pray.

God of all grace, we give you thanks that we are always accepted and loved, no matter what our story, no matter how strong we feel our faith is.

Move amongst us, by your grace, today, Lord God.

Amen.

### **Prayers of intercession**

As the Syrophenician woman challenged Jesus,  
May we also to challenge the priorities of the world...

Help us not to accept how things are,  
but to fight for Jesus' Kingdom values.

- Fight for a fairer distribution of the world's resources,
- Fight for a world without hunger and need,
- Fight for the most marginalized and desperate,
- Fight for an end to actual fighting and war.

Challenging God,

**Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.**

May we not jealously guard what we have,

but budge up and make space at the table.

- Space for the oppressed and persecuted,
- Space for this discriminated against,
- Space for all who have been excluded,
- Space for all who may not have felt welcome.

Challenging God,

**Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.**

Change our judgmental natures,

that our split-second judgements and internalized prejudices  
might not govern our behaviours.

- Change the hearts of those who govern or have power,
- Change the attitudes of people towards each other,
- Change the priorities of the world,
- Change us, that we might influence others.

Challenging God,

**Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.**

Speak words of healing to those who most need to hear them,  
we pray particularly for those known to us, for:

- Healing for all coping with grief,
- Healing for issues of physical and mental wellbeing,
- Healing for relationships and difficult situations,
- Healing for hearts and minds and souls.

Challenging God,

**Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.**

May we never grow complacent in our mission,  
to make your priorities the worlds priorities,  
and as we seek to bring that change,  
may we start with ourselves.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

**Hymn:** 696 STF – For the healing of the nations -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgWsjmgd0GA>

### **Blessing**

Go out to make space at the table,  
for those who are fighting to find room at it,  
for those who gather crumbs underneath it,  
for those still trying to get into the room the table is in,  
for those who don't even know the table exists...

Go out to make space at the table,  
And may all be invited.

Amen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

<sup>4</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

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