

Bulletin for Sunday 5th September 2021

Good Morning, Friends. We send special good wishes this week to children and young people (and teachers) starting a new term and a new year. May it be a happy one, and more settled than recent years.

Let's pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Morning has broken (R&S 45)

Prayer: God of creation, you are a living God
in whom we can both believe and trust.
We praise you for the beauty and intricacy of our world.
We praise you that with you there are no borders,
and no exclusion of 'outsiders'. All are loved.
We thank you that we can meet you in worship,
and we ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we give, in your service,
now and always. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Psalm 146 and Mark chapter 7 verses 24-37

Reflection: Seen from space, the world is a beautiful blue and green ball with swirls of white cloud. But if you look at a globe - a model of the earth; a human creation - it often looks quite different. There are indeed globes showing largely the physical features, which are not dissimilar to God's creation (with the addition of a lot of labels). More common, however, are multi-coloured globes showing countries and states, boundary lines and cities. They demonstrate a very human way of seeing the world, with the emphasis on nations and territory, and especially on their borders and limits.

In the gospel story Jesus was travelling well beyond his usual area - 'the region of Tyre' was then in the province of Syria, and is right outside the modern state of Israel, in southern Lebanon. The people there, including the woman who had this conversation with Jesus, were emphatically not Jews. Yet human need is the same everywhere, and this woman, whose name we don't know, was desperate and determined enough to approach Jesus, and then to persist in her quest when his initial response seemed dismissive. She didn't argue that Jesus was wrong to suggest that his mission was first to the Jews, but she pointed out that boundaries - between family and pets, between Jews and Gentiles - are not actually hard and fast. God doesn't have limits, but in the kingdom of God feeding and healing is for all. Jesus commended what she said, and her daughter was healed, as was the deaf man 'in the region of the Decapolis', another largely Gentile area. In

these verses we see Jesus making it clear, in word and action, that God's reign extends beyond the boundary of the Jewish nation.

Our world is based so much on a structure of boundaries, which can exclude or include people. May we remember that God created a world which looked very different, and that everyone is loved and welcome in the kingdom of God. Amen

Hymn: The church is like a table (R&S 480)

Prayer: God of love, our host at the table,
we pray for peace in our broken world,
holding before you the many people suffering
the consequences of war - injury, hunger, fear.....
We pray too for those who feel excluded
from society... from family... from the church...
may they, and we, find ways to dissolve the boundaries
and include all within your kingdom of justice and joy.
Loving God, hear all our prayers,
spoken and unspoken, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: The kingdom of God is justice and joy (R&S 200)

Blessing: May we be open to the truth, wherever it comes from;
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
now and always. Amen

As we gradually open up, we all have a part to play in keeping each other safe; so please continue to wear masks in church, and let us know if you test positive for Covid after attending worship or another event in our buildings.

And bear in mind, it's impossible to make our churches risk-free.

There will be an evening 'Sunday at Six' service on Zoom at 6pm as usual. All welcome.

Anne Lewitt