



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
August 16, 2020

Every part of worship has a video, so we've gathered them [together in a play list](#). [If you click on "Play All"](#), they'll play from the beginning of the service to the end! And you can just follow along, never clicking on another link. Or you can go through clicking on all the individual links – your choice.

Prelude: [Seek Ye First](#) by David Im and Dong-Hyeon Kim

[An instrumental piece to help you get settled for worship]

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

[Join the Shaklees, today's lay leaders, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Leader: The purple spikes of blazing star liatris
have drawn monarch butterflies
into the corner garden
of yellow and orange daylilies —

All: horns as wildly various in shape
as a jazz band —
and mums of burgundy and rust
tricked to early color by cool weather.

Leader: A dowager blue hydrangea,
we feared last year had died,
is heavy this summer with blooms,
and around her skirt waits,
immature, still green,
the riot of sedum
we will call autumn joy.

**All: I pause, but like the monarchs
fighting for their lives
on the journey from life to death,
my stopping with beauty,
Is not so much a stillness
as the tiny wing beats of hope,**

Leader: and my prayers are for earth,
the vulnerable,
and all who are suspended now
in the midst of the pandemic.¹

Hymn: *My Only Hope is You, Jesus*

[[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

If you have a favorite hymn you'd like to include in our worship service, just send it along and I'll look for a good place for it.

Lifting Up Our Joys & Concerns:

[Rev. Cath [sharing our Joys & Concerns.](#)]

O God of Unexpected Answers,
We come
with songs aching to be sung,
with words aching to be spoken
with questions aching to be answered,
with feelings aching to be expressed,
with arms aching for embracing.

¹ Today's opening and closing prayers were inspired by Maren Tirabassi , "Summer Garden: My Response to *Winter Frost*," Gifts in Open Hands Blog, posted August 4, 2017, <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com/2017/08/04/summer-garden-my-response-to-winter-frost/> (accessed August 5, 2020).

And so much of those aches, we must just bear
in this pandemic time,
carrying them like the concerns we have

For earthquake in North Carolina that shook a lot of folks up;

For Elly Austin's continuing cancer treatments

For the election in Belarus and the continued violence against the political
opposition;

For the people of Hong Kong and Taiwan as China demands recognition of
its power;

For all those caught in a time of testing and waiting, as Covid ripples
outward further and further;

For fear and anxiety pulling us into ever more narrow alleys of tunnel
vision;

Let your love
soak into the spirit and the skin
like a soothing salve.

We come
with wounds aching to be healed,
with hearts aching for love,
with emptiness aching to be filled,
with joys aching to overflow, joys

For the beautiful views from the top of Mt. Moosilauke;

For [a new song](#) from a favorite singer;

For Elly Austin's recovery from by-pass surgery;

For an anniversary bike ride that included a stop at a pie bar

For Donna's visit to her parents, with all the joy and patience that entails;

For Peter's safe return home;

For Jesus calling us to live in the real world

Let your love
soak into the spirit and the skin
like a soothing salve.

Let your love
soak into the spirit and the skin
like a soothing salve
and leave a tingle where once there was an ache,
So that all may say
we have met with God today,
and everyone was touched
and no one way turned away.
Amen.²

[\[The Lord's Prayer\]](#)

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

[For next week, please feel free to send me your joys & concerns and I'll include them in our prayers: minister@bccnh.org or call/text (978) 494-6953.]

Hymn: *God Answers Prayers* by DaFlame

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

Scripture Reading: Matthew 15:21-28

[\[Matthew 15:21-28 read for you\]](#)

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

² Today's Joys & Concerns prayer was inspired by Ruth C. Duck and Maren Tirabassi's *Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship*. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 179.

Reflection on the Scripture:

[\[The video of the reflection.\]](#)

There is a Jesus in this story that I don't recognize. He ignores the Canaanite woman's pleas for mercy. His disciples ask him to send her away because she is so annoying, and instead of telling them to pipe down, he draws a line and tells her she is on the wrong side of it. She persists and he calls her a dog.

He's come to the non-Jewish district of Tyre and Sidon. In all likelihood, he's trying to get away from the Jewish crowds who have been following him around, demanding that he heal their sick. But that isn't anything new. When we saw him with the bread and the fishes and the 5,000 men, not counting the women and children, he was trying to take a minute and grieve the murder of his cousin and friend, John the Baptist. When the crowds followed him there, and the disciples told him to send them away, Jesus told them to pull themselves together and feed the crowd.

But this time, he's ignoring and then declining to help this Canaanite woman. The Canaanites are the people who lived in the land of milk and honey when God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Like our own story of coming to a new land as immigrants, there was someone already on the land whose presence complicated the plan to just move in and take over. Within Israelite culture, the Canaanites worshipped idols, they were definitely "other", people best avoided or ignored.³

Yet in Jesus' genealogy we read all the way back in December, back when we read things together in the sanctuary, we read the beginning of Matthew. And in the genealogy of Jesus that Matthew provides, there are three Canaanite women: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth.⁴ So Jesus himself is the descendent of Canaanite women. And yet he treats her cruelly, ignoring her at first, and then telling her that he was only there to tend to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24) not her and certainly not her demon possessed daughter. He calls her a dog. And there's just no way that calling anyone a dog, then or now, isn't an insult.

There are some ways I could dig into the text to make Jesus more familiar, but in the end, he ignores her, he turns her away, he calls her a dog. And that is not the Jesus I recognize.

So do I skip over this story in Scripture, and move on to one where Jesus is more like he was in the Feeding of the 5,000? Well, right now, day to day, I've been looking for Jesus all the time and I'm not recognizing him a lot of the time. If part

³ Iwan Russell-Jones, "Proper 15, Theological Perspective, Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A, Volume 3*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 356 & 358.

⁴ Russell-Jones, 358.

of my job as a disciple of Christ is to see God in everyone I meet, recently it's been tougher to do that. And here is a story in Scripture that offers some guidance on what to do when you don't recognize Jesus and you really need him.

First, be clear on what you're asking for. The Canaanite woman knows what God has said, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on who I have compassion." (Exodus 33:19) and "I desire mercy not sacrifice." (Hosea 6:6). She asks for mercy from Jesus (Matthew 15:22) because that is how God defines Godself.⁵ She doesn't ask for healing for her daughter. She asks for mercy.

Second, be clear on whom you asking for mercy from. The Canaanite woman calls Jesus "Lord, Son of David" which is the title of the Messiah.⁶ At this point in Matthew's Gospel, no one has called Jesus the Messiah. The disciples are still figuring it out and everyone else is sure he isn't the Messiah. She is clear that he is and she doesn't hedge her bets. She's loud and clear that she knows who she's talking to and that the fact that he is the Messiah has deep meaning for her.

Third, be humble. The Canaanite woman kneels before him (Matthew 15:25). She is in the presence of the Messiah. She is asking him for mercy. She kneels at his feet and asks for help. She is even willing to be called a dog, seen as a dog. Jesus feels he has been sent only for the lost sheep of Israel, that you don't give food for the children to the dogs? Fine. She'll accept that she may not be number one on his list. But given God's infinite mercy, there is more than enough and the crumbs will be plenty.⁷

Finally, persist. When you are a marginal person, when you are a women with a daughter possessed by a demon, when you are an outsider, a person who belongs to a group that doesn't believe what everyone else believes, you have to persist in the face of a lot of people telling you to shut up.⁸ When you know God has infinite mercy, when you know that the kingdom of God has come to this world, when you know that the Messiah walks among you, unrecognized, when you can humble yourself because of what you know, stick to your guns. Be loud in your conviction that mercy is available to you and yours. When other folks tell you to pipe down, argue back, from what you know is true, until you bang their heads against the truth hard enough that they realize they knew that was true

⁵ Russell-Jones, 360.

⁶ Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Seeds of Heaven: Sermons on the Gospel of Matthew*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 62.

⁷ Charles B. Cousar, "Proper 15: Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28" in *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV— Year A*, ed. Walter Brueggemann et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 450.

⁸ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 179.

also.⁹ That all people are created equal. That all of us are entitled to equal treatment under the law. That all our votes count and should be counted.

Perhaps the point of this story is not to focus on the unfamiliar Jesus. But to see what we can do to make ourselves more familiar with the Canaanite woman. There will be plenty of times when we cannot recognize Jesus in situations where we long to know who to follow. Perhaps the point of the story is to get better at recognizing all the Canaanite women who walk among us, demanding mercy for others, reminding everyone that if we believe the kingdom of God is in this world, we better start acting like it. Perhaps then, we will see what Jesus saw. Those Canaanite women have great faith, and their wishes should be made a reality.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given

[\[Let's pray together.\]](#)

O God of Unexpected Answers,
you have given us more mercy
 than we could imagine
and more blessings than we deserve.
Receive our gifts as tokens of our gratitude to you,
that your mercy may be multiplied
and your blessings abound
to embrace all those in need. Amen.

Hymn: *Softly and Tenderly* by Billy Gaines

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

⁹ Anna Carter Florence, "Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost," in *Preaching Year A with Anna Carter Florence: Reflections on the Gospel Readings (2016-2017) Revised Common Lectionary*. (St. Paul, MN: Luther Seminary, 2016), 107.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

[[Let's pray together](#). Thanks, Shaklee Family, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

Leader: O God of Unexpected Answers, as we head back out into the world, we ask that this week,

All: We pause in our journey from life to death, and take in the summer beauty you have placed around us,

Leader: We ask that we glow in the colors you have lit within us, so that we shine with our great faith.

All: Let us sip nectar from the flowers, with our tiny wings beating with hope.

Leader: Let us share the crumbs from your table.

All: Until everyone's children are healed.

Leader: Let us walk through the challenges of the pandemic together.

All: Helping each other stay strong, helping each other flower in the summer garden of the Lord. Amen.

[CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: # 839 "God Be With You Till We Meet Again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again."](#)

[The Music Ministry crew made this bit of video for us, so we could all sing together, with each other and our former selves!]

Postlude: [Living Hope](#) by Phil Wickham

[Sing along and let it help you gear up to return to the world.]

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.



PRAYER LIST (8/16/20)

If you know those on this list, call on them & tell them we are praying for them. If you know others who should be added to this list please give their names to the minister or a deacon.

- Friends & family of Shirley Jeffreys, Hazel Corey, Jerry King, Tre Rouse, Tasha Feller, Pat Tiner, Terry House and Rev. Tom Atherton.
- Luca, Amy's nephew, as his new treatment appears to be having effect
- Those affected by the corona virus and those working to limit its impact
- Those suffering from domestic violence, who are caught at home with their abusers at a time of rising stress, that they might find safe havens.
- For everyone to stay as healthy as they can in the days to come
- For the friends & families of those who have died alone;
- For our church, that we remain patient with the process of re-opening;
- For earthquake in North Carolina that shook a lot of folks up;
- For Elly Austin's continuing cancer treatments
- For the election in Belarus and the continued violence against the political opposition;
- For the people of Hong Kong and Taiwan as China demands recognition of its power;
- For all those caught in a time of testing and waiting, as Covid ripples outward further and further;
- For fear and anxiety pulling us into ever more narrow alleys of tunnel vision;
- For those who have no one to pray for them, accept our prayers;
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Gracious Lord, bless me and make your face clear to me that I may see your will for my life and know the power of your salvation. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Merciful God, if I have disobeyed your will, show me my fault, that I may repent of my offense and receive your forgiveness. Grant me rest, secure in the irrevocable gift of your grace, and let me arise for the new day alert to your call to follow Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

Paul declares, "The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." How do the gifts and calling of God support us? How might they support us when we are not aware of them or even when we reject them?

Daily Awareness Reflection

At the end of the day, I've been asking myself the following questions. I jot down the answers and ask them again the next evening. I've found it helps me to remain centered as well as increasing my awareness of God in my life. It takes about 10 minutes.

1. Slow down. Stop. Prepare yourself to pray by becoming aware of the love with which God looks on you ...
2. Note the gifts God has given you today. Give thanks to God for them ...
3. Ask God that this be a time of special grace and revelation ...
4. With God, review the day. Look at the stirrings of your heart, your thoughts, and your choices as the day progressed. Which have been of God? Which have not? What does God want to say to you about both? ...
5. Ask for forgiveness for failures/omissions, for healing from their effects ...
6. Look forward to the following day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God's desire for your life ...

From Elizabeth Liebert's *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), p. 31.

Announcements:

Please shop smile.amazon.com and choose Brookline Community Church as your charity to support the church. Thanks!

The church's financial obligations continue. If you are able, please mail your offering to: Brookline Community Church, PO Box 507, Brookline, NH 03033.

	Actual Income	Actual Expenses	Income vs. Expenses +/-
July	\$42,784	\$48,975	(\$6,191)

Register to Vote

The Town of Brookline has put out guidelines on the variety of ways you can register to vote. You can certainly register to vote on election day, but to avoid standing in line, you can do it ahead, either in person or by mail.

For more information, see the information on the [town website](#).

Volunteer at the Polls

The polls for both the state primary on September 8 and the general election on November 3 need volunteers. If you are able to volunteer, in this time when so many of our neighbors cannot, please contact the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Patricia Howard-Barnett at (603) 673-8855 x4 or patti@brooklinenh.us

Complete Your Census Form

You can help Brookline and NH get its share of federal resources as well as all the other goods and services driven by the census data. Make sure [you've filled out your census form!](#)

Help Lines

This time of isolation can be very difficult. You may know someone who needs some support beyond what you can provide. We're in this together.

- Suicide prevention: 1-800-273-8255
- Sexual assault: 1-800-656-4673
- Domestic violence: 1-800-799-7233

Covid-19 Scams Targeting Seniors

The [NH Attorney General's office put out a press release](#) describing several scams that are targeting seniors. The claims range from needing personal information to get their Social Security payments, to being family members in need of cash to treat Covid-19 symptoms, to offers of fake medical products to prevent Covid-19, to needing personal information to get their stimulus checks, to fake charities. (Honestly, what are people like?!?). Please pass the word.

Covid-19 Information

- If people want to know the latest status of Covid-19 in NH and the Emergency orders to date, go to <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/>

Brookline Food Pantry

Although we cannot be together physically at this time, Outreach is continuing to work with Rebecca Purdin through the Brookline Welfare office & CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) to address any needs in our community.

The Brookline food pantry is now open on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10-2:00 for drop-offs only. There is a list on the [Brookline Food Pantry's Facebook page](#) that is being updated as items are needed. In addition to Market Basket gift cards, this week, like last week, they're continuing to look for:

Hot Dogs	Juice (Apple, Cranberry, other fruits)
Cheddar Cheese	Coffee
Eggs	Flushable Wipes
Olive Oil	Foil Wrap
Cookies	Trash Bags
Pudding (cups or mix)	Sandwich and Freezer Bags
Cereal	Bleach
Pancake Syrup	Dry Cat Food
	Fresh Fruit -- Apples and Oranges

Also, a big thank you to mask makers who donated masks to the food pantry already. They have been a huge help for people. If anyone has more to donate, we are running low. We still have several kid masks, but could use more for adults.

If you know of anyone who could use some help from the Food Pantry, please let Rebecca or Amy know. We sense there's more need in the community than is currently picking up food.

Donations can be dropped off downstairs at the Town Hall during regular hours of operation. There are large boxes for donations if there is no one in the Food Pantry. There is also a drop off at the Brookline Post Office.

Thank you for your continued support to our church and our community.