

*Common Worship in Separate Places*  
*For the people of Elmwood Avenue Presbyterian Church*  
*London, Ontario*  
*and their friends*

*The 5th Sunday after Pentecost*  
*27 June 2021*

*To cross the threshold into worship, light a candle and keep a moment of silence.*

*Opening Words*

L: I pray to you, O Lord; you hear my voice in the morning.

**P: At sunrise I offer my prayer and wait for your answer.**

L: Let us worship God.

*Prayers of Adoration and Confession*

Holy One, you are so high above us that we cannot comprehend you, yet so deep within us that we cannot escape you. In you we live and move and have our being. Call forth from the deepest part of ourselves the highest worship that is your due; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God forever.

Merciful God, hear us and help us to confess our sin. If we have turned away from you in fear, if we have not trusted your love and mercy, if we have harmed one another in selfishness and cruelty, teach us to be still and know that you are God. Help us to receive your forgiveness, and to find our life and peace in you.

L: Lord, have mercy upon us.

**P: Christ, have mercy upon us.**

L: Lord, have mercy upon us.

God of the living, in whose image we have been formed, with eternal life as our hope and destiny, dispel from your people the fear of death, and awaken within us the faith that saves; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be glory evermore. *Amen*

*An Assurance of Pardon*

L: "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people." May God grant us pardon, true repentance, and bring us to eternal life.

**P: May the peace of Christ be with us all.**

*Prayer for Illumination* Holy One, your voice is majestic and strong, blessing your people with peace. By your Spirit, help us to hear your voice today; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

### *The Psalm for the Day*

**Psalm 130** (*The mercy of God hears us.*)

Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;  
 Lord, hear my voice;  
 let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.  
 If you, Lord, were to mark what is done amiss,  
 O Lord, who could stand?  
 But there is forgiveness with you,  
 so that you shall be feared.  
 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him;  
 in his word is my hope.  
 My soul waits for the Lord,  
 more than the night watch for the morning,  
 more than the night watch for the morning.  
 O Israel, wait for the Lord,  
 for with the Lord there is mercy;  
 With him is plenteous redemption  
 and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

*(Said together)* **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen**

### *A Reading for the Day*

**St Mark 5: 21-43** (*Jesus heals*)

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. He 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 he told them to give her something to eat.

L: This is the Gospel of the Risen Christ.

**P: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### *Some thoughts on the Reading*

**St Mark 5:33** *In fear and trembling, she fell down before him and told him the whole truth.*

Here was a brave woman. We don't know her name, but we do know *her*. She's one of the 'walking wounded'. St Mark says she'd been "suffering from haemorrhages

for twelve years". But hers wasn't just a *physical* wound. Her soul never stopped bleeding either.

She was an 'untouchable', too, as 'socially repellent' as someone coughing with Covid. She was an outcast, she *knew* she was an outcast, and society made sure she knew she was an outcast.

She must have carried these wounds like pieces of heavy luggage. You can see it in people's bodies when their spirits are broken, can't you?

If we've never been wounded in this way, we're in no position to foist homely advice on this woman, and say, "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again!" We'd sound like Marie Antoinette, who never knew hunger, when she said to a starving peasant, "No bread? Why don't you eat *cake*?"

Who knows? Perhaps Jairus, the respected leader who 'had it all', had said this to her in the past. But not now. Life has enrolled him, too, in the school of spiritual suffering. "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord."

Jairus fell at the feet of Jesus. His readiness to set aside his dignity is the most dignified thing about him. "My daughter is dying. Come and lay your hands on her," he begged. Maybe decorum had been precious to him. But his daughter was more precious still.

The brave, wounded woman, too, discovered her power to act. Something within her refused to be a total victim. The world all around may have been quick to call her worthless, but something within her surged up and said, "*No, I'm not.*" Surely this was the work of God in her, already, even before she touched the hem of Jesus' cloak.

Remember the glorious prologue to St John's gospel? "In him was life, and the life was the *light of all people.*"

We all have place within us where the divine light shines brightly. Can we sense its presence? It's the dwelling place of 'faith'. We may only feel it when the hour of desperation comes, but it has been there all along.

This woman's faith used her desperation the way a lever uses a fulcrum. It *propelled* her to act boldly on her own behalf. She was not just a 'patient, now, but an 'agent' on her own behalf.

An agent is someone who *acts*, but a patient is passive, someone acted *upon*. And it sounds as though she'd played the part of 'patient' for too long. "She'd endured much under many physicians," says St Mark, "and had spent all that she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse." We hear similar tales in hospital waiting rooms today, don't we?

She'd heard about Jesus. Now she *acted* on what she'd heard. She threaded her way through the crowd. She approached him secretly, from behind. She reached out. "If I but touch his clothes, I'll be made well," she thought. She touched his cloak. *And she was healed.*

And yet, her physical healing is just a precursor to her deeper, soulful healing – not just a cure for a bodily wound that never stopped bleeding, but salvation for a soul that never stopped suffering – *for that wound depletes life too.*

But what she'd tried to deal with in secret can only be dealt with openly.

"Who touched me?" asked Jesus. Something flowed *out* of Jesus. "He was aware that power had gone forth from him," says St Mark.

A mysterious transaction took place. Something 'influenced' her in that moment. Something strangely similar happens when we influence each other. The power that flowed from Jesus flowed *into* her now. "She felt in her body that she was healed," says Mark.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

She might have run away at that point and returned to a life of hiding. But she didn't. For her dignity and worth were being restored in that moment. She could feel their return and she found her voice, even though it quavered.

"She came in fear and trembling and fell before Jesus," says St Mark. She told her whole truth to *him*, to 'the true life of all'.

This must have been the bravest moment in this brave woman's life. She did what we fear most of all, which is to be open and honest and vulnerable; not to hide our shame and our wounds – the way Adam and Eve hid their nakedness – but to let them be seen by the eyes of love.

We whisper to ourselves, "If people truly saw me, they would not love me." This is not exactly our original sin. It's more like our original *wound*. And it turns out it's a vicious lie. If it were true, it would make outcasts of us all. But it's not true.

Still, the lie depletes us. "If people truly saw me, they would not love me."

With a love that see and knows us, our Lord takes not just our *sins* but our unhealed *wounds*. Our shame and self-loathing flow out from us and they flow into him. Life and healing flow from him and into us.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," says Isaiah. Whatever else the cross means, it must mean *that*.

Jesus does not say to this woman – or to us – "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again..." He says, "I *see* you. Your faith has made you well. Be healed. Go in peace."

### ***Prayers of Intercession***

Lord Jesus Christ, lover of all, you come to us in the depths of our darkest despair. Trail wide the hem of your garment. Bring healing. Bring peace.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for the whole Church of Jesus Christ, for the parish Churches in our own city, and for Elmwood Avenue Church. Though the doors of your sanctuary are

locked, your heart remains open to us, and ours to you. Thank you for blessing our life together. Remind us that this will always be so. Defend us from despair. Fill us with hope.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for Canada. From the confession of difficult truths, let your healing and justice flow into every corner of our land. Help us to be honest and merciful. Judge our nation wherever it is wrong and strengthen it where it is right. Give our leaders courage to do what needs to be done, however costly or difficult, to bring healing to the indigenous people of our land, and forgiveness in every place of conflict.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for those chased by troubles and hounded by sadness. Lord Jesus Christ, when you lived among us, the sick were brought to you for healing. Hear us now as we bring to you in our prayers those who are ill, those who know they will soon die, and all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. Trail wide the hem of your garment. Grant healing. Grant peace.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

Gracious Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Sanctify our homes with your presence. Make them sanctuaries of your peace and joy. Bless those far away, but dear to us, wherever they may be.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We remember those we have loved dearly, who have died. We thank you for them, for the gift of those who, in friendship and love, shared themselves with us, and revealed a dimension of your love in Christ. We want, in our own way, to do this too. Help us. Then bring us with them, in our due course, to fullness of your kingdom of peace...*(keep a time of silence in God's presence)*....

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

Teach us, O God, not to torture ourselves, nor to be cruel to each other. Teach us to breathe the healing breath of peace, bestowed by your Spirit in the gift of your Son. And to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory evermore.

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, so we pray:

**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 evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. Amen**

***Benediction***

*(Said together)* **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever. *Amen***