

*Officiant:* The Churches of our Diocese stand on the traditional territories of the Algonquin Nation.

*People:* **May we dwell on these lands always with respect and peace.**

*Officiant:* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all.

*People:* **And also with you.**

### **The Collect of the Day**

Almighty God,  
you have broken the tyranny of sin  
and sent into our hearts the Spirit of your Son.  
Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,  
that all people may know the glorious liberty  
of the children of God;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### **The Proclamation of the Word**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS:** GENESIS 45:1-15; PSALM 133; ROMANS 11:1-2a, 29-32;  
MATTHEW 15:21-28

*(You may use your own Bible, or click on this link:*

<https://lectionary.anglican.ca/nrsv/?date=2020-08-16>

*This link includes a suggested lengthening of the Gospel, which you may or may not choose to use)*

### **Sermon**

Let me tell you about Jim. I only met him once, but it was a profound encounter. He was not a member of my Parish, but a neighbouring Parish – the Rector away, and I was covering for emergencies.

Jim was dying.

He had been in hospital for several months. His health was challenged by quite a number of things. Jim's wife called me; there was to be a family meeting with medical team; and as her Rector was away, she asked me to be there.

Jim's medical condition was being treated fairly vigorously; Jim's wish was to treat them vigorously; at first he had responded well, often to surprise of doctors. But the aggressiveness of treatment had taken its toll, and in the doctors' opinion, he didn't have the strength he had a few months previously to handle his problems, as well as increased vulnerability to infections.

Jim had 2 wishes; to walk again; to go home. Both were highly improbable.

Two possible outcomes:

1. Continue with vigorous, maybe even heroic treatments.

If successful, the best case scenario was that Jim continue to live, be on a ventilator 24/7, and probably be at St Vincent's Hospital.

2. Switch focus to keep Jim comfortable. No pain. No aggressive intervention as problems arise. Let nature take its course; and in due course he would pass away.

Doctors said they try to save life; but what do they do when they know it's slipping out of their reach? what do they do when they can't save life?

They didn't ask the family to make a decision; and the doctors weren't making a decision. These were the two ways things might go. They talked about resources, about attitudes. Jim's wife. "He's a man of faith". Doctor affirmed that: "that will be an important resource for him."

The family's question: What would Jim say to this? Well, let's find out.

So we went to the ICU. Jim sedated – sedation was withdrawn.

Doctor – he was sensitive and honest; and compassion for Jim.

"We can continue to treat aggressively, if all goes well, with no set-backs, no new problems, with your weakened body, the best I can see is you being on ventilator all the time, and probably on continuous dialysis.

"Or, focus on your comfort; no pain; no active treatment.

What do you think? Jim, I want to know what you think."

Jim's reply: "I want to fight."

"Well, that's pretty clear. That's what we'll do. Thank you."

And we prayed; I anointed Jim; sedation resumed.

For me, it was a privilege to be with people (people of faith) as they struggled with discernment, discerning the way ahead for someone they love. And supporting him. This situation – can't look it up a manual of simple instructions and find the answer. The family, the doctors, Jim himself had to struggle through to find the answer, with as much integrity as they could.

Gospel today. It's about the struggle for discernment.

Jesus challenged by this Canaanite woman, a foreigner, to heal her daughter. The encounter is very disconcerting, and the story causes difficulties for many.

She asks Jesus to heal her daughter. At first Jesus ignores her, and then dismisses the woman by appearing to dip into the rule book: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." My job description is to my own people.

"Lord, help me."

Instead of a response to the woman's need, Jesus uses a derogatory term, "dog," to describe her:

"It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." You're a foreigner – I'm not here for you.

Biblical commentators go to great lengths to convince us that this isn't really as insulting as it sounds. And I'm not really sure that they succeed. The text stands in all its stark harshness, leaving us uncomfortable and puzzled by how Jesus could have said such a thing.

Nevertheless, the woman is undeterred and she persists, and converts the insult into a theological affirmation. "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Surely we're entitled to some left-overs? The woman acknowledges the commonly held Jewish view of her people, and yet asserts that they too are part of the family of God, deserving of God's grace, deserving Jesus' care.

And Jesus accepts what she says, and responds. Jesus changes.

Here is his human side. Just like we have to do, Jesus grows in his understanding of God's will. In the early months of his ministry, he had seen his vocation as fairly narrow, to the house of Israel, his own people; here he is forced to look beyond it, to be more universalist.

Jesus changes his mind; he commends her for challenging him. Listened to someone that others would have ignored; he acted in compassion when no one would have faulted him for moving on. He listened, he healed, he changed his mind, when doing so might cost him respect in the sight of his followers.

This incident is a pivotal point for Jesus; he begins to understand his mission isn't only for Jews. His good news is for everybody. Eventually he would be able to say, in his Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Jesus was changed by this encounter;

his understanding of his mission expanded, developed, changed.

I find that tremendously hopeful, that Jesus, as a human being like me, didn't know it all at the beginning. His understanding of what the Father was calling him to do had to grow, had to be stretched.

We've got to put ourselves (as the Church) into Jesus' shoes:

The kind of discernment we're called to exercise is not about certainty – especially not when certainty threatens to overrule compassion.

Because that's what I believe – compassion – was there all the time with Jesus: he understood his mission, his calling to include entering into relationship – real relationship – with others. That's love.

And real relationship, loving relationship, changes everyone involved. And thank God for that!

Nobody's life and ministry, not even Jesus' life and ministry, is an unchanging straight line. One direction may be appropriate for a period of time; but when circumstances and people change, a different direction becomes appropriate for the next phase. And thank God for that!

That discernment which comes out of compassion changes Jesus, it changes the foreign woman and her daughter, the disciples, you, me, Jim, Jim's wife and children, Jim's doctors and nurses. Because it was compassion driving discernment that I saw that day I met Jim.

As we left the hospital, discernment had come. And it was good and right. And it was in no way negated by the fact that Jim only lived a week longer. But at that point, because of the compassion that was at play, it was good and right.

### **Apostles' Creed**

*Officiant:* Let us confess the faith of our baptism as we say,

*All:* **I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again  
to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

### **Intercessions and Thanksgivings**

Holy Father, grant us pardon and peace,  
cleanse us from all sin,  
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,  
and keep us in peace and life eternal.

Lord, help us.

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

Bless, O Lord, your Church with the grace to proclaim your saving power,  
that we may lead people from the captivity of fear and darkness into your light.  
We pray today for the Scottish Episcopal Church, The Most Revd Mark Strange –  
Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church & Bishop of Moray, Ross & Caithness.

We pray for our Bishop Shane.

We pray for St. Alban the Martyr, Ottawa, and St. Bernard-de-Clairvaux, Ottawa; for The  
Reverend Mark Whittall.

We pray for all who lead others to you, through writing, art or music.

We pray for the hard-hearted and the insensitive.

Lord, help us.

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

Forgive, Lord, the sins that divide us.

We pray that the artificial barriers between peoples and nations may come down.

We pray for ethnic minority groups,

for all who are judged because of their race, colour or creed.

We remember all refugees, all outcasts and rejected peoples.

Lord, help us.

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

We give you thanks for those who in love brought us to you,  
for those who shared their faith and love with us,  
for those who helped us discern what you would have us do,  
for those who helped us grow and become better persons.

We pray for our homes and our loved ones.

We pray for homes where there is no faith,  
or where there is no love.

Lord, help us.

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

We remember all who have loved ones in sickness.

We pray for children who are distressed or in pain.

Give courage and hope to all parents who are anxious for their children.

We pray for those who are challenged;

for the autistic, the schizophrenic.

We pray for all who are diminished by evil, or their surroundings.

We pray for those in need of healing:

for those who have invited our prayers, especially Zachariah, Marjorie, Cheryl, Roy,  
Jeanette, Emerson;

those affected by the COVID 19 pandemic;

and those who are on each of our hearts and minds this morning.

Lord, help us.

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

We remember all who have suffered a painful or violent death,  
all who have died suddenly through accident or crime.

We pray that they may have a new freedom in your love.

Lord, help us.

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

*Officiant* Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray as our Saviour Christ taught us,

**All: 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,  
the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

*Officiant:* The God of grace and glory, restore, strengthen, guide you;  
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among you, and  
remain with you, now and always. **Amen**

*Officiant:* Go forth in the name of Christ

**All: Thanks be to God.**