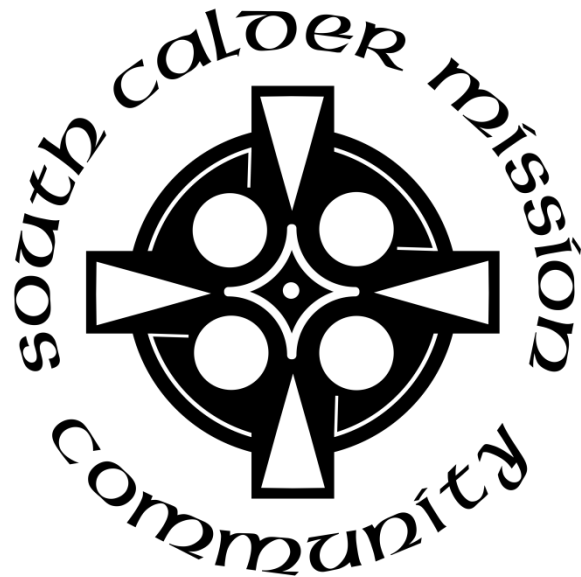


*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word
for
Sunday 16 August 2026
Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

This service is taken from A Service of the Word,
Morning and Evening Prayer, Night Prayer,
which is copyright (c) The Archbishops' Council, 2000,
with permitted variations.

INTRODUCTION

*"God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful
to all."*

Romans 11:32.



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.
Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our
sins in penitence and faith.

**Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleanse me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

God of glory, the end of our searching, help us to lay aside all that prevents us from seeking your kingdom, and to give all that we have to gain the pearl beyond all price, through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **All people that on earth do dwell.**

THE WORD OF GOD.

Isaiah 56 : 1, 6-8.

Thus says the Lord:

Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—
these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices

will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.
Thus says the Lord God,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered.

Psalm 67.

God be gracious to us and bless us ♦
and make his face to shine upon us,
That your way may be known upon earth, ♦
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God; ♦
let all the peoples praise you.
O let the nations rejoice and be glad, ♦
for you will judge the peoples righteously
and govern the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God; ♦
let all the peoples praise you.
Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, ♦
and God, our own God, will bless us.
God will bless us, ♦
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Romans 11 : 1-2a, 29-32.

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **Only by grace.**

GOSPEL

Matthew 15 : 21-28.

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.

REFLECTION – Belonging to the true people of God.

Who is in, and who is out? Do you know what it feels like not to belong? A lot of years ago, some neighbours of ours, who lived in a large house with grounds, invited us to a big dinner dance in a marquee raising money for the NSPCC. The tickets were expensive, and as we were a youngish vicarage family with one income and with young children, they thoughtfully paid for our tickets. We went along on the night and sat down for the meal with some other people, and soon discovered we were out of place. Once they realised we didn't have money, weren't interested in impressing others with our society connections and weren't interested in horses or riding, they didn't bother taking any notice of us or talking to us. We enjoyed our meal and went home. It was nice of our friendly neighbours to include us, but it wasn't our scene and we didn't feel welcome among the 'county set' although we had tried to talk to them.

We'll come back to that later, after we've looked at who are the people of God? Who belongs, and what that means for us today, in our churches, and how we live our lives.

First of all I'd like to think about 'What's at the heart of the gospel? What's at the heart of Christianity?' I found John chapter 3 verse 16 coming to mind:

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

God so loved the world.....

Love, God's pure love is at the heart of it all.

That's why the Pharisees often clashed with Jesus. They went by the rules constructed to keep them from becoming unclean, but which seem to have developed to a constricting point, which excluded many people, even Jewish people. They went by the rules instead of having compassion.

Let's go back to the Old Testament for a look at the roots of Christianity. It tells the story of how God called first Abraham, and then developed the people of Israel and Judah, the Jews, to be his people, his nation. If that was still the qualification for belonging to the people of God, we would not be a part of God's family, the Church, today. I cannot begin thinking about what that would be like. My Christian faith and living it out is so fundamental to me that I can't imagine what life would be like without it, or without you, the Church family, either.

Yet even in the Old Testament, and in our reading from Isaiah today, we find the question 'Who are the true people of God?' being asked, and a surprising answer coming back –

'Those who maintain justice and do what is right.'

Verse 3 (which is missed out of the reading) says:

'Let no foreigners who have bound themselves to the Lord say that the Lord will surely exclude them from his people'

All who keep God's covenant, who love the Lord and are his servants will be accepted. God's house, the temple will be called a house of prayer for **all nations**. God has a plan for the world, for us all, because he loves us.

Now we have that background, let's look at the New Testament reading from Matthew. This is a rather different picture of Jesus that we see to start with. He seems reluctant to engage with the Gentile, or non-Jewish woman at all. She has nothing going for her. She is a Canaanite, a pagan people worshipping nature gods. Worse still she is a woman, in that society at that time with very little status or rights. Why did she even bother trying to see Jesus? She was obviously desperate to get help, healing for her daughter, who was in terrible suffering. She had heard about Jesus and knew who he was, she called him 'Lord, Son of David' acknowledging his status as the Chosen One, the Messiah. She had faith in him.

The disciples had tried to get rid of her unsuccessfully, and tried to get Jesus to send her away. but he says that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel, the Jews. Interestingly, my commentary says that the gospel of Matthew sees the time before Jesus' death as the time for the Jews to be offered the gospel, and only after his resurrection as the time for preaching to the Gentiles – all the rest of us!

So why is this story included? Perhaps because it breaks the mould, maybe that's why it was so memorable. I also noticed that sheep, dogs and children all make an appearance in the conversation, none of whom had any importance at all apart from how useful they were! Anyway, back to Jesus and the woman. Having been dismissed as being 'not whom Jesus had been sent to,' she still persists and pleads with him for help. And Jesus replies:

'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.'

This seems insulting, but she understood his meaning, children being the Jews, or God's children, and Gentiles often referred to as dogs by the Jews. She replies cleverly that it **is** right, but that even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Very humbly she admits that she has no right to be given what she asks for, but she believes in him, has faith in him, and acknowledges him as Lord.

And Jesus grants her request, her daughter is healed, and she is commended for her great faith! She has been accepted because of her great faith. Jesus, God's Son, came to Earth, lived as a human, died on the cross and was raised to life so that **all of us** can find our way to God, and if we accept him as our Saviour we can be part of God's people.

So, I wonder, where do **you** and **I** belong? Thinking back to my story about feeling that we didn't belong, how does that apply now? In the Church family, how do we help those who find it hard to belong? Are there people who might feel unwanted? How do we reach out to people who are marginalised in society – the poor, those who are lonely, those who struggle with mental illness or physical disability for example? And last but not least, how can we be open to God's love, and how can we let it flow out to others?

Lots of questions and challenges, which is often what I find reading the bible. Thinking about these things helps us to keep letting God speak to us, and be part of his Kingdom and his love for the world.

A prayer to finish from Judith Dimond's ' Gazing on the Gospels.'

*Lord God of all peoples,
may I be open to your truth in the voice of strangers,
and search for your wisdom among the excluded and oppressed,
and be willing to change my mind
as your Son did when the woman of Canaan
sought you in faith. Amen*

Sheila Falkner.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **There is a redeemer.***

THE CREED

**All I believe in God the Father,
 whose loving care is the pattern for family life.
 I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
 who lives in my heart through faith,
 and fills me with his love.
 I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
 who strengthens me with power from on high.
 I believe in one God;
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**



THE PRAYERS

A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*

Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace.

**Look upon our divided world
to be with those who are victims of violence.**

**We pray for all people
who have been subjected to the cruelty of others.**

**Help us to know the gift of your peace
in the power of your Spirit and
we ask you to soften the hearts
of those who can stop the fighting.**

**Creator God, we ask for your aid as your children of light
living in the darkness of our world.**

Amen.

Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group.

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

**Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church
in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder
Mission Community;
for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by,
for all who make up your family in our churches today,
for the faith we have in common, and for the people and
traditions which make each church unique.**

**By your Spirit, guide and equip us,
that together we might find new ways
to reach out to our local community,
to show your love to our neighbours,
and to encourage them
to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives.**

**Father, we offer ourselves to your service,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

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

THE CONCLUSION

<i>Suggested hymn to sing or read In Christ alone.</i>

The following prayer is said

**Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.**

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,
send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty.
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

All people that on earth do dwell.

https://youtu.be/42_kOGDTpKg

Only by grace.

<https://youtu.be/fnaQIMtQ820>

There is a redeemer.

<https://youtu.be/5SG3a7PTSFE>

In Christ alone.

<https://youtu.be/rn9-UNer6MQ>