

A song to sing or to read: The Summons

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known?
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

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Closing Prayer

Let us go and communicate with others and to pray for others
to love others, to help others, to build others up
to just be with God and to know our belonging to God and his family
this week and for ever more.

Amen

With thanks to Kay Owens for preparing today's reflection



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Church in a Bag

Sunday 16 August

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

Our God creates
Our God cares
Our God loves
Our God knows
Our God stays
Our God binds
Our God calls
Our God gives
Our God forgives
Our God is.



Preparation

Our God who created the universe, our world in all its magnificence and diversity, its systems and its adaptations, we praise you.
Our God who created us and cares for us, we give ourselves to honour you with our lives and in our actions, in our work and in our words.
Our God who loves us through coming to earth to show us the way through his life and his death, we thank you.
Our God who knows us intimately but stays with us to guide us, help us to listen and respond.
Our God who provides for us in many ways and in special ways, may we use these gifts wisely for your work.
Our God forgives us and all people no matter what our circumstance or background. You love us and we pray that we who are blessed with our churches, our families and our education will know to lean on you and do as you want.
Our God who was, is and will be, who goes beyond our known group and comfort zone, give us strength to learn, to listen, and to love others.

Readings: Matthew 15:21-28 Genesis 45:1-15
Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Reflection

Tyre and Sidon were important trading centres. Generations were affected by wars with one nation or another taking them over for the trade and port access. People were traded. Some were poor, some of ill-repute, some powerful and ruthless, and many were born of mixed and varied races. There were alliances between the Jews and other nations by the rulers of these towns. Jesus travelled there as a major centre with an important synagogue. One woman, a Canaanite who were traded as slaves, had a daughter with a mental illness. The cause was unknown, but it could well have been the traumas of war and cruelty down through the ages. Jesus turned her aside saying his message was for God's people. For those who followed God. But she persisted. "We will take the crumbs, please, please meet our needs", she said, implying he alone could cure her daughter. Jesus heard her faith, her plea "Lord, help us". He healed her daughter. What an amazing story! Did he make a point to those around who were Jewish that faith and listening to God should be more likely for them who were well educated in Jewish law than this woman? So why do they hesitate? Why do we hesitate to listen to God's call and his gift of a full, contented life even when we have heard God's word for many years in church? God's gifts and God's call is unchanging, no matter our background.

God is a God of history. Like the last story that reflects the history of the towns of Tyre and Sidon and the Jewish nation, the Genesis story tells of how Egypt managed to survive through famines when there was no rain while the other nations around did not. It was Joseph, obviously a Jew, who had predicted the plenty followed by a drought when God spoke in a dream. Joseph had the gift, the wisdom to interpret dreams. He was smart enough to organise the storage of the abundance of grain which was fed by the Nile, its flooding, and Egyptian simple irrigation. Now the drought had struck the Jews. However, God had a plan to save his people. Joseph had been sold by

his brothers as a slave to Egypt. Now he organised the distribution of food. He said to his brothers who had caused his hardship, "Have faith and God will take care of you". And he did. Joseph was not just showing his power over them or his wealth compared to them, but he did show love and care, at least for his father and full brother Benjamin. But the others were also well treated. The Egyptians too were cared for by God. God loves all people, no matter the circumstances, race, gender, or age. He forgives us when we do wrong and through these stories of our life, he develops his relationship with



us. The call, as it was to Jesus' disciples and to Joseph, was to act and show God's love to others. May our prayer today be for the wisdom to know God's call and to know he is faithful to us. Are we faithful to him in responding to his call?

We like to tell our stories on Facebook, the phone, in letters, or just talking over a cuppa. These stories show of our relationships. Through the stories of our relationship to God, or through Bible stories told in a meaningful way, we too can share with our friends and neighbours, those to whom we have already shown love or walked beside through difficult times and good times. Do we pray for those whom we love to know what story we can share to show God's relationship to us and them? This is our challenge from Jesus today. Our love for them comes first. From Paul's letter for his team to those in the churches of Thessalonica "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us". (1 Thess. 2: 8).

Think of God's messages to you from the many stories of his love in the Bible, especially Jesus story of the two brothers.