

Mothers' Union: Mary Sumner Day Morning Prayer

9th August 2020 – by Revd. Canon Libbie Crossman

Welcome to this service of thanksgiving for, and commemoration of, the life of Mary Sumner. Our service today comes from Christchurch Cathedral, Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia.

My name is Libbie Crossman and I'm the Zone Trustee for the South Pacific Zone.

As we begin, we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Larrakia people, and honour their elders, past and present.

The Lord be with you
And also with you

Isaiah said¹, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'"

We pray together Mary Sumner's personal prayer:

All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch, do Thou by Thy Spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live. Amen

God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, **have mercy on us**

God the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, **have mercy on us**

God the Son, redeemer of the world, **have mercy on us**

The collect for Mary Sumner day:

Faithful and loving God,
who called Mary Sumner to strive for the renewal of family life:
give us the gift of your Holy Spirit,
that through word, prayer and deed
your family may be strengthened and your people served;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew²:

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² 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." ²³ 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." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

For the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

1 Chapter 6, verse 8

2 Chapter 28, verses 21 to 28

Sermon

May my words spoken and heard give glory to God, creator, redeemer and giver of grace. Amen

As Jesus met the Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon, places that did not exactly welcome Jesus or his message, he heard the plea of a desperate woman and responded to them, as he had done so often previously in other places. I'm sure that all of us have been in situations that the only thing we can do about it is plead: plead with God to help. I know I have. At this present time there are many of us, millions, making their pleas to God for help, and God is hearing our pleas. The situation we are living through at the moment is something that none of us have ever known, but Mary Sumner knew, certainly knew, about a situation such as this. About a century ago she would have lived through another pandemic, the Spanish Flu pandemic, and it is more than likely that she had friends or maybe family who were affected or maybe even died from the Spanish Flu and there is no doubt that she would have prayed just as you and I are praying today.

In the small village of Sutton Veny in southwest Wiltshire there is a memorial service held every year for the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who died of the Spanish Flu while awaiting repatriation home from their war service. The village took to them to their heart, hence the annual service that continues to this day. I would like to believe that there were women there, perhaps even Mothers' Union members, who gave them solace. But what happened after it was all over it was truly amazing: by the time the pandemic had come to its end a century ago, Mothers' Union had committed itself to an amazing task, to providing a home for itself in London: each member of our worldwide organisation committed one pound to make that commitment become a reality.

Today we have committed to raise one million pounds for Mothers' Union to survive into the future, and already we have over three quarters of that amount already: truly amazing! We give thanks to God that just as Jesus had heard the pleas of the Canaanite women, he heard the amazing faith of Mary Sumner that gave her courage to begin this truly remarkable global gift of prayer, worship and service to a world that needs it. We need it today, as it did a hundred years ago.

We come now to our prayers in thankfulness for the life of Mary Sumner:

Lord we pray for the desire to love and serve you as she did.
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

For families who live where there is war, oppression, injustice and poverty,
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

For homes of peace and love reflecting your love for us all,
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

For wives, husbands and partners, that they may grow ever deeper in love for each other; for grace to be able to forgive and be forgiven,
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

For children to grow up to know and love you,
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

For families who at this time know the pain of COVID-19 or coronavirus or any illness of body, mind or spirit,
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

For Mothers' Union across the world: for courage, energy and a sense of adventure, to fulfill its call,
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

We pray with thanksgiving for all who have run the race and kept the faith: may we also share in your heavenly kingdom,
Spirit of the living God, **hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who taught us to pray:

**Our Father in Heaven
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done, on Earth as in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive all who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever.
Amen.**

And we say together our Mothers' Union prayer: ³

Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name.
Amen

Lord, we give you thanks for the life of Mary Sumner, for obedience to your calling, for her vision for Mothers' Union. We pray that through the grace of your Holy Spirit we may receive renewed confidence and share that vision. We give you thanks and praise for the many people around the world who reach out in the name of Mothers' Union. Through our work may we touch the lives of those we meet, that they too may know your love.
Amen.

God above, **give us faith.**
Christ beside us, **give us love.**
Spirit within us, **give us hope.**

**And now may the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may abound in hope.
Amen**

³ <https://www.mothersunion.org/what-we-do/faith-and-prayer>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK4z8_UwNVI

The transcript is based the one supplied by YouTube.

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The liturgy of this morning's service is taken from the document at this link:

<https://www.mothersunion.org/sites/default/files/resources/public/Mary%20Sumner%20Day%20Morning%20Prayer%20Order%20of%20Service.docx>

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