

DAY 7

1 Samuel 1:13-17

Matthew 15:21-28

Starting Point

The marginalization and dismissal of women's voices continues in our own times and in our own culture. Within our own churches we are often complicit with attitudes and actions that devalue women. As we become more aware of the issues, so we begin to recognize the many ways in which women are subjected to violence and injustice. Human trafficking, exploitation of women and children, and sexual abuse continue to be the reality for many women. In the scripture readings both Hannah and the Canaanite woman are dismissed as 'worthless' nuisances. But they stand up for themselves, change the perceptions of Eli and Jesus, and achieve their deepest desire. Many women are unable to challenge marginalization and exploitation. As Christians unite in prayer and the study of the Scriptures, truly listening for God's voice, we discover that God also speaks today through the cries of the most abused in society.

Reflection

Hannah

Weping silently,
praying from the heart before
the Lord,
why does Eli think she is drunk?
Quiet, dignified, refuting her accuser,
she is promised her heart's desire.

The Canaanite woman

Nameless,
fierce and canny on behalf of
her daughter,
turning insult to advantage,
rejection to praise resounding
throughout centuries.
Great is your persistent faith!

The 'worthless' woman

Belittled, discounted, invisible,
why won't you hear my story?
Why won't you believe what they are
doing to me?
Desperate worm turning,
speaking out, #MeToo,
a tsunami of testimony, standing
strong together,
mountains pushed aside.
Nothing is impossible with God.

Woman, great is your faith! (Matthew 15:28)

Prayer

Gracious God,
you are the source of human dignity.
By your grace and power
the words of Hannah, from the midst
of her tears,
challenged and turned the heart of
Eli the Priest.

By your grace and power
the Canaanite woman was
emboldened to reject rejection
and move Jesus to heal her daughter.
As we strive for a Church which
unites all humanity,
grant us the courage to reject all
forms of violence against women
and to celebrate the gifts
that women bring to the Church.
This we pray through Jesus Christ
our Lord,
in whom all may find their true
worth and calling. Amen.



Questions

- How would you describe a person of great faith? Think of someone you know.
- Can you remember a time when you felt marginalized or dismissed?
- What can we do to empower women, children and other marginalized people in our community?

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

Visit Go and Do to find out how the Side by Side faith movement for gender justice is making great progress across the world.

Organize a local event with the churches in your area to mark and celebrate International Women's Day on Friday 8th March. Visit Go and Do for resources and ideas.

Wear black each Thursday in solidarity with all across the world who are working and longing for the day when there is an end to violence against women. Find out more at Go and Do.