



Sunday 15th November 2020
Dementia Awareness from Thursday Form
Narrated by Jean Hadley



Introduction

Today we are turning our thoughts to Dementia and how we can begin to understand the illness. It is going to affect many of us, whether we ourselves are going to have to live with a diagnosis or whether we have a family member or close friend who is already living with it. Statistics already tell us that one-in-three people born today will develop Dementia during their lifetime, so in some way or other, it is already part of our lives.

However young or old we are, we all forget a name or a face sometimes, and this is especially so as we get older, but Dementia is something different.



The word 'Dementia' is an umbrella term for a number of conditions, the most common of which is Alzheimer's disease. Recently, we have come to recognise the need of having a 'Dementia-Friendly Community' - a community that is supportive of those affected by it, offering and receiving friendship from the affected person and their loved-ones. For example it has been shown that symptoms of Dementia can be improved simply by having more social contacts.

So what about us at Quinton Methodist Church? How can we begin to help those suffering in this way?

This naturally leads to the idea of 'Dementia-Friendly Congregations' – something that is capturing the imagination of the national Church. Let **us** at Quinton be called a community where people can **age well**.

Prayer

We know, Lord, the frustration and fear that our loved ones feel every day when they have trouble with a memory problem. They have memories - happy memories of **their** family and of **their** youth, of beautiful days spent with **their** loved ones. By talking to **our** loved ones, we pray that with your guidance we can help to preserve those memories.

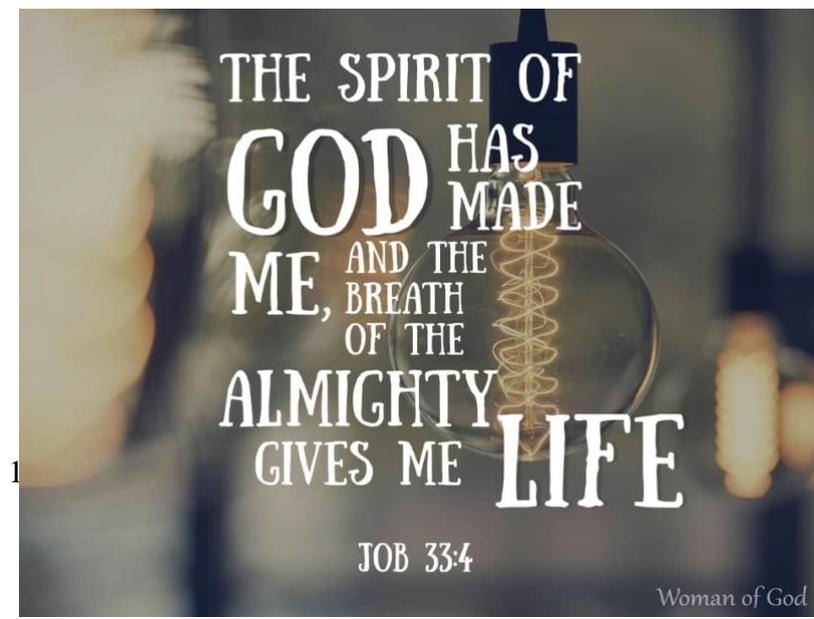
May we always show gratitude and love when we speak with them, so that they may feel relaxed in our presence.

Thank you God that you are always there for us and help us to show patience, grace and love to those who help us in the difficult tasks we may be faced with day by day. Grant us the wisdom and serenity to be good care givers to our families and friends.

Help us to see clearly how we can help, and to recognise when the best time to offer help is. Teach us patience, that we will bring love to the task.

Guide us away from our panic, and towards compassion, that we may continue to build happy memories with our loved ones. Amen

STF. 370. Breathe on me, Breath of God
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9s8BFHThfc>



Luke 8. V26 - 39

Jesus and the disciples went by boat to the country of the Gerasene's, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped ashore he was met by a man from the town who was possessed by demons. For a long time he had not worn clothes nor lived in a house, but had lived among the tombs. When he saw Jesus he cried out, fell at his feet and said, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" Jesus was already ordering the unclean spirit to come out of the man, for many a time it had seized him. For safety's sake they would secure him with chains but each time he broke loose and was driven out into the wilds. Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion" he replied.

This was because so many demons had taken possession of him. There was a large herd of pigs nearby, feeding on the hillside. Jesus ordered the demons to come out of the man and go into the pigs and the herd rushed over the edge and into the lake and were drowned. When the men in charge of the pigs saw what had happened they took to their heels and carried the news to the town and countryside, and the people came to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus and found the man sitting at Jesus' feet clothed and in his right mind, they were afraid. Eyewitnesses told them how the man had been cured. Then the whole population of the Gerasene district was overcome by fear and asked Jesus to go away, so he got into the boat and went away. The man begged to go with him, but Jesus said to him, "Go back home, and tell them what God has done for you." The man went all over the town proclaiming what Jesus had done for him.

Thoughts on the Bible reading:

Christian Healing by Melanie Seward.

(abridged by Jean)

At the centre of today's Gospel reading we have a man shunned by society. He is described as:

- not wearing any clothes,
- living in the open air amongst the tombs,
- shouting out,
- speaking with voices,
- as needing to be shackled
- having the strength to break free from his chains during his most traumatic times.



Some of the symptoms of the man in the story certainly sound like what we would call today, mental health issues.

In this reading, Jesus enters a situation where others are afraid to go. He does so calmly, lovingly, and with consideration. He sees behind the symptoms and relates to the individual who is worthy of God's healing. In this one meeting, so much happens; a situation is made safe, violence is transformed into peace and an individual once ostracised is given a purpose in a community.

In his earthly ministry, Jesus teaches us how to overcome the suffering in the world.

God's love, forgiveness and healing grace is for everyone - no barriers exist.

In 2020 Jesus is still at work in the world.

The reality is that we are all open to the possibility of experiencing poor mental health and none of us is immune to mental illness. Dementia is like a journey on a rollercoaster with ups and downs, and for some of us, the 'ups and downs' will be more dramatic and longer lasting.

STF. 83. Praise my soul, the King of Heaven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BdsANZcACs>

Prayers of intercession:

We pray for those suffering who have to be reminded of what they need to do and say. As they grow frail, their memory may fail them, and they may struggle to find the right words, even though their lives are made up of many stories.

When the memory fades, we know that it is not today that is remembered, but days of long ago.

So let us cherish today all the memories we are making, memories that are written in the book of life and stored forever in grateful hearts.

Life is a gift from you.

Memory is a gift from you.

Let us accept your gifts with joy, and always remember that you are the beginning and end of our story. We pray for those whose lives we share and for those whose memory now fades, whose enjoyment of life's story is changing.

Make us aware of the needs of others, of the dignity of life at every stage, of the collective memory that we own.

Bless those who care for those with dementia, who share the journey with them.



We pray for all those whose work is dedicated to the assessment and care of those who experience confusion and profound memory loss, for all who work as Healthcare Professionals in everyday care and research into the causes of Dementia of many kinds. May they be strengthened in their work of service - with individuals, families and friends.

For all carers in this world, young and old, whose love, time and freedom, sometimes even childhood, is given sacrificially for one who is in need.

May they know your blessing through good days and bad, and may they receive your love as they have given love in good measure.

Memory fades, and recollections become hazy clouds. Only fading outlines of strangers' faces and forgotten places remain.

Even the familiar loved ones and names that once tripped lightly off the tongue, now cause confusion in what seems a cruel taking apart of a life once lived.

Compassionate God, for those already walking down this lonely road, grant them peace.

May each moment, however brief, be filled with joy - not sorrow,

and may your love be seen through those who care for these, your loved and fragile people.

We make every prayer to you, Lord, in the name of Jesus, our companion on life's journey, and with the Holy Spirit, our inspiration and our life. Amen.

Conclusion:

If the time comes that we need to be caring for a person with Dementia, we may find that as the illness progresses we'll have to start discussions to get the person to make conversation. This is common. Their ability to process information gets progressively weaker and their responses can become delayed.

One caregiver shared her account recently of a precious time she spent with her mother:

During my last visit, I was seeking God with questions:

Can my mother access you?

Can she access her long-held faith?
Can she receive comfort from you, Lord?
Her social skills have deteriorated such that
we don't have much of a two-sided
conversation.

Can she converse with you and share her
fears, needs, things she can't share with me
anymore?

God graciously reminded me that relating to
him is not dependent on **her** ability to
access **him**. God's ability to connect with
my mother is unchanged.

As my mother took a nap (something she
does a lot of these days) I prayed that God's
presence would fill her living space.

And then I asked God,
What about her last moments?
What if she is afraid...?"

In that moment, God answered me:
I'll be here with her, and she will know it.
Have no fear"

STF. 81. Now thank we all our God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLjJBFIXR0>

Benediction

A poem by Norman McNamara:

Oh dear Lord, hear my prayer, and show me that you really care,
Trouble is I can't remember all my prayers for you to tender,
Will this matter, on that day? When we meet, what will you say?
Please forgive me, as you know, no matter what, I love you so.
Amen.

Prepared by Jean Hadley for Thursday Forum following discussions with Tracy Tomlinson, Alzheimer's Society Volunteer. 9 November 2020.

Collated by Tony Burridge.

