



Introduction

The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around the word we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity one God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts.

We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.

We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.

We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us.

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us;

and in your Spirit, lead us;

so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy

we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus,

through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.

Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope.

For hope does not disappoint,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn

God, Whose Almighty Word

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Psalmody: Psalm 67

- ¹May God be merciful to us and bless us;
may the light of God's face shine upon us.
- ²**Let your way be known upon earth,
your saving health among all nations.**
- ³Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- ⁴**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide all the nations on earth.**
- ⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- ⁶**The earth has brought forth its increase;
God, our own God, has blessed us.**
- ⁷May God give us blessing,
and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe.

Second Reading: Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

God has not rejected Israel. Rather, the call and gifts of God are irrevocable so that, while all have been disobedient, God has mercy upon all.

Read the text [here](#).

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus teaches his disciples that true purity is a matter of the heart rather than outward religious observances. Almost immediately, this teaching is tested when a woman considered to be a religious outsider approaches him for help.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

It seems like we are always looking at reasons to keep people out. Almost any club or organization has membership requirements. You need to have certain qualifications, hold a certain degree or mastery of some skill. For jobs, people new to the industry have a hard time getting in because everyone wants you to have at least 3 years of experience. Today in politics, we ask not only what are your qualifications and where were you born, but even the circumstances of your birth seem to be an issue.

Sometimes, requirements are essential. If some basic skills are required for safety purposes, and not having them could put people at risk. These days, entry into most public places requires a mask, maybe a temperature check, all things which are good for public health. There are many places where there are not and should not be requirements barring people from entry (beyond the basic health related issues we face during a pandemic).

Entering a library has very few requirements. You don't even need a library card to get in – only if you want to check something out. Entry into the kingdom of God is the same way – there are no requirements.

Paul, in this third Sunday of hearing his arguments about why the people of Israel are not excluded from the kingdom of God, says that we need to first and foremost understand that the people of Israel received the first covenant. God has not rejected the people he first knew. God has claimed them as his own and that has not, by any means, changed. The original promise that God made to the descendants of Abraham is still valid and will not go away.

In fact, as Paul tells us, this promise is irrevocable. And we should be glad that it is! If God would revoke this first promise to his chosen people, then what of the promise God has made to us, as followers of Christ? If God would revoke that first promise, then we should live in fear that God might revoke the promises made to us. But we are reminded over and over again by Jesus – I will be with you until the end of the ages. Never forgotten, never turned away, always watched over and forever loved.

Even the Canaanite woman in today's Gospel text seems to be pushing the rules of who Jesus is to minister to. When Jesus hears her request, he reminds her that he was "sent to the lost sheep of Israel." Not to the Gentiles, even though Jesus had already had other encounters with Gentiles in Matthew's Gospel such as the Magi (2:1-12), and the centurion (8:5-13) before this encounter with the Canaanite woman. Only her argument that even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table wins her argument. Jesus then heals her daughter with a word. No one is excluded by Jesus – even when he says they should be.

Even in our world today where everything seems to be turned topsy-turvy, these words of Paul and of Jesus remind us that we are never alone, we are never excluded, and we are always – always watched over and loved by God.

Paul says of the people of Israel – are they excluded? By no means is his answer. By no means, and by Jesus example, neither is anyone else. As Paul wrote in last week’s lesson – all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Martin Luther was accused of trying to get more people into heaven than should be allowed, and many times in his writings, Luther seems to agree with Paul that nothing can separate us from the love of God. It is not through our own doing, but through the faith given and nurtured by the Holy Spirit that saves us.

This is what Luther wrote in his response to the third article of the Apostles’ Creed:

”I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.”

It is through the gift of the Holy Spirit that we come to faith, and through that faith that we are saved. We are justified by grace as a gift from God (Romans 3:24). Just as Jesus responded to the Canaanite women, Jesus will hear our prayers as well. Just as God will not abandon the people of Israel, neither will God abandon us. In one commentary it is written, “The God who gives and the God who calls may be trusted to retract neither the gift nor the call. Our own refusal to receive or to listen may become profound disobedience, but even this cannot thwart the divine purpose.” God’s grace is for all.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Hymn of the Day

There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Lord, you gather the church to be part of your mission as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. As Jesus acknowledged the great faith of a woman from outside his people, help your church discover and find blessing in the faith of people we might reject.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have blessed us with the bounty of the earth. Grant your grace to all your creatures, that the earth will flourish. Relieve waters choked by garbage, renew soils stripped of nutrients, and refresh the air all creatures need to live.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You call the nations to be glad and sing for joy. Let your way be known among all the nations of the world, now divided by competing interests, contending alliances, and consumed by enormous worry. Bless us and make your face shine upon all.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You show unexpected mercy, kindness, and generosity. We pray for those who do not have enough, for outcasts in our villages, cities, and town, and for those who need your healing, especially those we name now. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In you we live and move and have our being. Grant our congregations grace to find our life refreshed in you. Accompany us in the rhythms of late summer. Give us rest and renewal, and strengthen us for mission in your name.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Your eternal promises are more than we could ever imagine. As you gather all the saints, join us also with them on the great day of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

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

Blessing for the Beginning of the School Year

We pray for all who are beginning a new school year, whether online at home or in school buildings, that both students and teachers will be blessed in their academic endeavors. We pray too for all the parents who have faced difficult decisions for their children. We pray for all the other school employees: bus drivers and cafeteria workers; administrators and office staff. We pray for the safety of all in this unusual time in the midst of pandemic, even as we pray for a successful school year as we do each fall:

Almighty God, you give wisdom and knowledge. Grant teachers the gift of joy and insight, and students the gift of diligence and openness, that all may grow in what is good and honest and true. Support all who teach and all who learn, that together we may know and follow your ways; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn

In Christ There Is no East or West

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.