

Notes for Next Sunday

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 56:1, 6-8). In verse 1 there is a call for justice and righteousness. This can only be done as a response to the mercy and goodness of being redeemed by God. Here God describes the new life for all who embrace His salvation. Verses 6-8 are about Isaiah progressively revealing that foreigners will become part of God's covenant people and confess the true God. In John 17 Jesus prays for those who will yet believe when he says, *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”* (John 17:20-21). The “house of prayer” can be linked to Solomon's dedication prayer at the opening of the Temple built during his rule which foretells the inclusion of all nations.

Epistle (Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32). Paul was writing to Christians in Rome, the majority of which were Gentiles. This text is similar to our Old Testament reading except that here the Jews are the minority. The issue here is not race but the acceptance or rejection of God's grace. God still has His gifts and His gracious invitation for His people to receive the salvation offered through His Son. God remains faithful to His promises.

Gospel (Matthew 15:21-28). Jesus is in pagan territory. This Canaanite woman was a descendent of the OT race that Israel was ordered to exterminate because of their idol worship (Dt. 20:17). When she calls Jesus “Son of David” she addresses Jesus in the same way as did two Jewish blind men (9:27). In contrast to the Pharisees who were spiritually blind, she was not (v 14). When Jesus talks about “being sent to the Lost house of Israel” this does not exclude the grace he shows to the heathen and those who come to him in faith. As soon as the divine plan had been worked out, it would be carried to all the world. Jesus answered the mother with a pithy statement expressing a general truth or rule of conduct. Because of the proverbial nature of His statement, He may not be calling her a dog. This astute woman matched Jesus' maxim with one of her own: Pets get the scraps that fall from the table. This is the second time Jesus commended the faith of a Gentile (cf 8:10).

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

This is what the LORD says: “Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. ⁶ And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant— ⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” ⁸ The Sovereign LORD declares— he who gathers the exiles of Israel: “I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.”

56:6 serve. Isaiah employs the verb “serve” to announce that foreigners will assume priestly roles. This all-inclusive priesthood is the point the prophet makes at the end of his book (Is 66:21; cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9). (CC)

56:7 my holy mountain. The theme of the “mountain of the LORD” (Mount Zion) is common in Isaiah; it occurs in passages that depict the coming of both Jews and Gentiles to Jerusalem (Zion). The peace

described in this passage has been inaugurated through the coming of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, and will be consummated at the return of Christ. (CSB note)

56:7 offerings ... accepted on my altar. The worship of all peoples, here described in OT forms, will be acceptable to God. (TLSB)

56:7 house of prayer for all nations. See 1Ki 8:41–43 for Solomon’s dedicatory prayer of the temple and the anticipated prayer by Gentiles that God will hear. (TLSB)

56:8 gathers the exiles. The Lord gathers both the exiles of Israel and others not of this fold (John 10:16). We are lost in our sins, unable to find God. The Good News is that the Good Shepherd comes looking for us and gathers us, as Luther declares in his explanation of the Third Article in the Small Catechism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 3)

EPISTLE – Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. ¹³ I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry ¹⁴ in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ²⁸ As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, ²⁹ for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. ³⁰ Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹ so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. ³² For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

11:28: on your account. The Jews are objects of God’s hostility as far as the Gospel is concerned because they oppose it. But in God’s plan this was for the Gentiles’ benefit. (TLSB)

11:28 loved on account of the patriarchs. † Not because any merit was passed on from the patriarchs to the Jewish people as a whole, but because God in love chose Israel. (CSB)

11:29 God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. † God does not change his mind with reference to his call. Even though Israel is presently in a state of unbelief, God’s purpose will be fulfilled in all who believe. (CSB)

11:30-31 The experience of the Jews and of the Gentiles are parallel. Both have received mercy in the face of disobedience. Because of Israel’s disobedience (1:18-32), undeserving Gentiles received mercy. Because of the mercy to the Gentiles, disobedient Jews will receive mercy (cf v. 11) (TLSB)

Paul summarizes not only vv 30–31 but also the overriding purpose of God’s mercy in chs 9–11. All people—Jews and Gentiles—are imprisoned in their disobedience, with no possibility of escape unless God in His mercy releases them. “We should not reach conclusions about our election to eternal life based on reason or God’s Law.... <The true judgment about predestination> must be learned alone from the Holy Gospel about Christ” (FC Ep XI 9–10). (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 15:21-28

²¹ **Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” ²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to**

him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.²⁶ He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”²⁸ Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

15:22 Have mercy. Typical cry for help in a desperate situation (17:15; 20:30). (TLSB)

15:23 Jesus did not answer. Jesus is silent at first in response to the woman’s cries. He is not only testing her faith, but also testing the disciples’ understanding of his universal mission. The woman annoys the disciples by following them and disturbing the peace. They ask Jesus to “dismiss her,” which may imply, “Do what she asks, so she will go away.” Jesus’ reply to the disciples, which seems on the surface to be rather cold and unfeeling, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel,” is likely meant for the woman to overhear and further test her faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

15:25 Lord help me. This woman would simply not be turned away. (TLSB)

Apparently overhearing Jesus’ words, the woman is moved to action. She humbles herself completely, worshipfully kneeling before Jesus and pleading, “Lord, help me.” This is more than a frantic request from a desperate mother. It is a prayer of faith. Following her example we should come to Jesus with our requests as beggars before the Master with a humble, worshipful, and trusting heart. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

15:26 children’s. Now Jesus wants to know this: does the Canaanite woman really know who He is, or are the things that have come out of her mouth been just words and no more? (CC)

15:27 even the dogs. How did she know? Who had taught this Canaanite woman about Israel’s Messiah? We simply do not know. Matthew’s hearers/readers do know, however the ultimate answer to the question of how this woman came to know and believe. The Father revealed it to her. She is, like the Magi and the centurion before her, an unlikely candidate for such faith. (CC)

The dogs literally “little dogs,” appear to be house dogs, not the strays that roamed the streets, especially since they are near enough to the table to feed on any leftover scraps. Still, dogs were considered lowly and even contemptible, and thus the boundary between Jew and Gentile is maintained. On the other hand, that Jesus names her as a dog is progress as the woman now sees herself in the house with Jesus! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 3)

15:28 you have great faith. In what does greatness of faith consist? Two things. She knew Jesus is “Lord” and “Son of David.” And she knew that Israel’s Messiah had come to give such an abundance that there would be something left over even for her. (CC)