

Worship

The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

August 16, 2020

Introduction

In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. 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 word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

Gathering/Announcements

P. = Pastor

W. = Worship Assistant

A. = All in attendance

Prelude: "Prelude in E Minor" [BWV 553] *Johann Sebastian Bach*

Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness

P. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

P. Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.
(Silence is kept for reflection.)

P: Reconciling God,

**A. 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.

P. 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.

A. Amen.

Opening Hymn: # 856 "How Great Thou Art"

O Store Gud

A. 1. O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hand hath made.
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed:

Refrain:

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, how great thou art!
How great thou art!

4. When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation,
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration and there proclaim,
My God how great thou art!"

Refrain

P. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion
of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

A. And also with you.

Kyrie

W. In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of
God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,
let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

A. Amen.

Canticle of Praise

**A. Glory be to God in heaven; peace, goodwill to all the earth.
Mighty God of all creation, Father of surpassing worth:
we exalt you, we adore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.**

Saints and angels bow before you; here on earth our songs we raise. Glory be to Christ forever, Lamb of God and Lord of love.

Son of God and gracious Savior, you have come from heav'n above; on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.

Hear our prayer; restore, forgive us; in your promise firm we stand.

**Holy One we now acclaim you; Lord alone, to you we call;
Holy One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:
Jesus Christ, with God the Spirit, in the Father's splendor bright.
For the peace that we inherit, glory be to God on high!**

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray:

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.

A. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

The prophet calls upon Israel to do justice in view of God's imminent intervention to save. Righteousness and obedience define who belongs to the Israelite community—not race, nationality, or any other category.

W. ¹Thus says the LORD:

Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.

⁶And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—

⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;

for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

⁸Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

W. The Word of the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 67

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

- W.** [Paul writes:] ¹I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ^{2a}God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. ³²For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

- W.** The Word of the Lord.
A. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

- A. Alleluia. Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom and cured every sickness among the people. Alleluia. (Matt. 4:23)**

The Gospel

- P.** The holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 15th chapter.
A. Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 15:10-28

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.

P. [¹⁰[Jesus] called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand:¹¹it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles."¹²Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?"

¹³He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit."¹⁵But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us."¹⁶Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding?

¹⁷Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."]

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just 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."²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us."

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

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

A. Praise to You, O Christ.

The Sermon

"Great is Your Faith!"

In our gospel lesson for today, Matthew tells us that "leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon." Now, Tyre and Sidon lay outside the land of Palestine to the north of Galilee. It was a land occupied by people of various religions.

None of these religions was more detestable to the Jews than the Canaanite religion. Here Matthew reports that a Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Jesus and was crying out to him, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

Certainly it was nothing new for someone to come to Jesus crying out for healing - either for themselves or for someone they loved. Certainly news was traveling fast about Jesus' ability to heal. But this was a Canaanite?

The Jews wanted nothing to do with the Canaanites. And it didn't help that this particular Canaanite was a woman. As you know, in the time of Jesus, women had very little status in Jewish society. They were considered the property of their husbands or their fathers. They had very few rights.

You see further that in Jesus' time it was not appropriate for a Jewish man to interact with a strange woman, particularly a Canaanite woman. She surely knew this. Thus, who did this woman think she was, crying after this Jewish teacher like this?

It is interesting, don't you think, that she called him, "Lord, son of David"? This was a messianic title. Outside of Simon Peter, who else was ready to proclaim Jesus as the messiah? No one in Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew tells us that when this woman confronted Jesus with this appeal to heal her daughter, "Jesus, did not answer her at all." It may be that for a moment Jesus was taken off-guard. Here, a woman of a despised religion has appealed to him as the messiah. This is something new.

Now, his disciples can see that she is troubling the Master. "Send her way," they urge him, for she keeps shouting after us." Finally Jesus answers quietly, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

This is an important statement. You see, there is no evidence in the Gospels that Jesus even so much as entered a Gentile home. His mission was to bring salvation to the world through the historical framework of the Jewish faith.

This did not mean that he was anti-gentile. He was not anti-anybody. But he was here for a specific task - to usher in a new kingdom - the kingdom of God - specifically built on the moral and theological foundation of Judaism.

And so it seems that he may have been uncertain about how to deal with her. Then, the woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. And Jesus replied with the words that have troubled his followers through the ages.

Jesus tells her, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." This seems very uncharacteristic of Jesus. Maybe this is just a test of this woman's faith - that we do not know.

Or maybe he was just citing a common saying of the time. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." Or maybe, this story was included as a reminder of how pervasive prejudice is in every culture and how hurtful it can be to use a derogatory term for another human being.

At any rate, this phrase hangs out there causing us discomfort. But then this woman gives a wonderful response, "Yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Touche! You weren't going to dismiss this worried mother with a casual off-handed remark. She might be a Canaanite but more importantly, her daughter needed healing. And besides, she knew she was in the presence of the messiah.

Yes, if Jesus was who he said he was, he could not turn her away. And of course, he didn't. Jesus said to her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And we are told, her daughter was healed instantly.

"Send her away," the disciples had urged. Send her away. She's a woman. Send her away. She's a nuisance. But this woman knew what many people don't even seem to grasp today: everyone is equal in the sight of God. It doesn't matter who they are!

Indeed, even today, people can harbor prejudices - prejudice between the genders, prejudice between racial groups, and prejudice between religious groups. And these prejudices serve as barriers to fully accepting one another.

Some of these prejudices may even affect how we see God. We may not even be aware that we share those prejudices until something happens that wakes us up, that shocks us as this story of the Canaanite woman shocks us, and suddenly we see that among those who acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, such prejudices are unacceptable.

Indeed, prejudice comes in many forms. It can be racial, it can be economic, it can have to do with gender. Prejudice still today displays itself in many ways. Indeed, prejudice can keep us from seeing other people and their needs. Prejudice can cause us to ignore and even avoid people who are not like us.

However, understand this: when the Kingdom of God comes all prejudice will be expelled. The Canaanite woman saw that. She knew that Jesus was the Messiah and she knew, therefore, he could not turn her away.

Indeed, did you realize that this woman is the only person in the Gospel of Matthew, male or female, who is commended for having great faith? Others are commended for their faith, but only she for her GREAT faith.

Certainly she was a lady with great determination. The prejudices of the society in which she lived did not get her down. She attacked them head on. Of course, she was a mother who was greatly concerned about her daughter. You see, love can give a person courage. She was pushy, perhaps.

And yes, she was a nuisance. But she was a hero of the New Testament. It is clear that she was a hero to Jesus. . . Jesus said to her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Amen.

The peace of God that passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Hymn of the Day # 592 "Just As I Am, without One Plea" Woodworth

- A.** 1. Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
4. Just as I am, thy love unknown
Has broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Peace

- P.** The peace of Christ be with you always.
A. **And also with you.**

The Apostles' Creed

- P.** Let us now confess our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.
- A.** **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 into hell,
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 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

- W.** 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.

W. 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,

A. hear our prayer.

W. 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,

A. hear our prayer.

W. 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,

A. hear our prayer.

W. 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 **Pat Brick, Merlinda Bisese, Denise and Pat Wylie, Kenneth Shoemaker, and Carol Miller, those suffering from the coronavirus, and those whom we now name in our hearts before You . . .*** Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. In you we live and move and have our being. Grant our congregation 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,

A. hear our prayer.

W. Caring God, be with us as we continue to live through this coronavirus pandemic. Grant us the grace to look to You, who turns all things to the good for them that love You. Grant the necessary wisdom and success to our scientists and doctors who strive to find the cures and vaccines so that this pandemic may be overcome and that we may return to a more normal life. May we show Christian compassion as we reach out to those experiencing grief and need during this time. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. 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,

A. hear our prayer.

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

The Lord's Prayer

- P.** Lord, remember us in your kingdom and continue to teach us to pray:
- A. 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

- P.** The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.
In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
A. Amen.

Dismissal

- W.** Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
A. Thanks be to God.

Postlude: "Fugue in E Minor" [BWV 553] *Johann Sebastian Bach*

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