

Prayers

In peace and joy let us pray to the Lord.

Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting Father,
You give Your children many
blessings even though we are
undeserving. In every trial and
temptation grant us steadfast
confidence in Your
loving-kindness and mercy;
through Jesus Christ, Your Son,
our Lord, who lives and reigns
with You and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Scripture Readings

Psalms 67 (antiphon v. 5)

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

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

Matthew 15:21-28

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 615 *or* 653

Other Hymns – 901 (OT), 831
(E), 613 (G), 779 (G)

For the Church, that she may steadfastly proclaim the gifts and
calling of God, that the disobedient may receive mercy, and that those
who hear may become branches grafted onto the true vine, Jesus Christ.
Lord, in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

For our congregation, that we may bring offerings and sacrifices
of praise that are acceptable to God; that we would be a house of prayer
for all people; and that through us God would gather in the lost and
outcast, the widowed and orphaned, and all who are in need. Lord, in
Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

For all pastors of Your Church, for _____ our synodical
president and _____ our regional pastor, that they would serve as
faithful under-shepherds of Him who is the Chief and Good Shepherd,
our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

For the government and those who protect us, that they may keep
justice and do righteousness; that they may carry out their duties in
accord with God's will; and that our land would be blessed with honest
industry, truthful education and an honourable way of life. Lord, in
Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

For the sick and afflicted, for all who are in need of our
intercessions [especially _____], for those beset with grief
and sorrow, for those in pain or trouble, that the Lord may answer
those who beg Him according to His will and have mercy on all. Lord,
in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray,
trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who
lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and
forever. **Amen.**

Season after **PENTECOST SERMON**

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Series A)

Sermon Text: Matthew 15:21-28

“Even The Crumbs”

“Jesus withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.” So today’s Gospel Reading begins – Tyre and Sidon being Gentile territory northwest of Galilee. Our Lord typically stayed within the borders of Galilee, but He was avoiding Jewish opposition as a result of a recent confrontation that He had with the Pharisees from Jerusalem. The Pharisees were upset that the disciples broke their tradition of ceremonial hand washing before eating, and they wanted Jesus to answer for it. But instead of offering an apology, Jesus challenged their practice of placing man-made traditions above God’s commandments . . . teaching them that unholiness is the result of our sinful nature which comes from within us; and has nothing to do with observing their humanly instituted rules. ‘Hypocrites’ called them; that is, religious play-actors, saying one thing but doing the opposite. So, it’s understandable that He withdrew to Gentile territory for a while to give them some space . . . let them cool down a bit.

While He was there He is approached by a Canaanite woman who was in great distress. Her daughter was severely oppressed by a demon and she was desperate to get help for her. She cries out to Jesus, *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.”* And even though she was a Canaanite woman . . . an unclean Gentile, she spoke like a believing Jew. She called Jesus *“Lord”* and addressed Him as the *“Son of David”* – recognizing that He truly is the promised Messiah; and so turns to Him for help.

Somewhat surprisingly, Jesus, however, does not even acknowledge her and remains. The disciples come forward to try and deal with the situation by asking Jesus to give her what she wants and to send her away. That way she would leave them alone and stop crying out after them and making an embarrassing scene.

And how does Jesus respond? In a most shocking, dismissive way . . . and certainly not what we would expect. After all, Jesus had already helped and healed many people who cried out to Him for mercy. But in this case He tells the disciples, *“I was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel.”* In other words, because this woman and her daughter were not Israelites, they were not part of the people that He had come to save. Sorry. Tough luck.

And yet, even in the face of Jesus’ dismissive, harsh words; the woman persisted. She kneels before Him and calls Him *“Lord”* for a second time and cries out again, *“Help me!”* And if Jesus’ words to the Canaanite woman seemed harsh before, they only seem to get harsher. So He says, *“It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”* In other words, He has been sent only to save the lost sheep of Israel; and, as such, it is not right for this Canaanite woman to receive what by divine right belongs to the family of Abraham.

What’s going on here? What’s wrong with Jesus? Actually, nothing. For by these words Jesus wants to know if she really and truly knows who He is. Were they just words when she called Him *“Lord”* and *“Son of David”*; or did she actually know what she was saying by addressing Him this way?

The woman remains persistent; and then shows her great faith when she replies: *“Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”* In other words, ‘Yes, Lord, You are Israel’s Messiah. The bread You give does belong to them. Yet, I believe that the bread of the Messiah is so abundant and so overflowing that some of it falls from the table to the floor, and that even the crumbs are enough for me and my daughter.’ In faith, she cries out to Jesus for grace and mercy. And do you know what? That’s what she got; as we read: *“Then Jesus answered her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed instantly.”*

Now, we don’t know who taught this Canaanite woman about Jesus of Nazareth being Israel’s Messiah. But we do know that ultimately it was the Father who revealed it to her; even though she was an unlikely candidate for such faith. We too are unlikely candidates for such faith and such blessings; after all, like this Canaanite woman we are not part of God’s chosen people Israel by birth. Even more, we are sinners who deserve only God’s present and eternal punishment.

But like this woman, we too have heard the Good News about Israel’s Messiah. And as the psalmist declares, *“Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame.”* Likewise, St. Paul says that *“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* And so, we too call on the name of the Lord, trusting in His mercy, trusting that we will be saved.

Yes, like that Canaanite woman, we too are not God’s people by birthright. We do not deserve to have a place in His household. Instead, our sin deserves eternal separation from God. But our baptism into

Christ has changed all that. Through the waters of our baptism we have been adopted into God's family . . . the uncleanness of our sins has been washed away . . . and we are made His own treasured possession. In Galatians the apostle Paul says that all who have been baptised into Christ Jesus are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise – whether they be Jew or Gentile. And as fellow heirs, we too are invited to the Lord's Table, the Sacrament of the Altar, where we don't just receive some crumbs that fall from the table; but the Bread of Life itself – Jesus' true body and blood that forgives our sin, nourishes our faith, and promises eternal life.

It is remarkable, isn't it?, that this woman persisted when Jesus did not even answer her request and seemed to dismiss her because she was a Canaanite. And there are similar times in our lives when it might seem like God doesn't answer us either . . . that He has ignored and dismissed us. But with this Canaanite woman, let us recognize our humble position as sinners before God . . . and in repentance, cry out, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David."* After all, in this account of the Canaanite woman and Jesus, we hear the Good News that God truly has answered our cries for mercy with a word – the Word who became flesh . . . Jesus, the Son of David and Saviour of the world. And in His name we persist in faith – trusting that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever as His dearly beloved children. Amen