**Our Redeemer Lutheran Church Prospect Heights, IL**

**11th Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, August 16, 2020**

**AS WE GATHER**

The earthly ministry of Jesus was for the most part in a restricted geographical area. For the three years of His public work, He traveled in the area of Judea and Galilee with a singular sojourn through Samaria. But at least on one occasion, He went beyond familiar boundaries north to the district of Tyre and Sidon, in what today is Lebanon. There He brought healing for the daughter of a Canaanite woman, a person seen as a Gentile and an inferior by the Jews of His home area. The love of Jesus broke down barriers and reached across divides. As people who have been sought out by Jesus, we seek ways to extend His love as the Holy Spirit works in and through us.

**HYMN** “Blessed Jesus at Your Word” LSB 904

1 Blessèd Jesus, at Your Word
 We are gathered all to hear You.
Let our hearts and souls be stirred
 Now to seek and love and fear You,
By Your teachings, sweet and holy,
Drawn from earth to love You solely.

2 All our knowledge, sense, and sight
 Lie in deepest darkness shrouded
Till Your Spirit breaks our night
 With the beams of truth unclouded.
You alone to God can win us;
You must work all good within us.

3 Gracious Savior, good and kind,
 Light of Light, from God proceeding,
Open now our heart and mind;
 Help us by Your Spirit’s pleading.
Hear the cry Your Church now raises;
Hear and bless our prayers and praises.

**INVOCATION**

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

Pastor: It is good and right that we should make confession of our sins. The section on confession in the Small Catechism informs and directs us with these words, which summarizes it well.

**People: Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.**

Pastor: Humble yourselves then before God, confess your sins to Him, and implore His forgiveness.

**People: O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a troubled and penitent sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your present and eternal punishment. By nature, I am a sinful creature. By thought, word, and deed, I have continually transgressed Your Law. For the sake of the sufferings and death of Your Son, Jesus Christ, be gracious and merciful to me, a penitent and contrite being. Forgive me all of my sins, and grant me the power of Your Holy Spirit that I may amend my sinful life.**

Pastor: God be gracious to you and strengthen your faith.

**People: Amen.**

Pastor: As you believe, so let it be. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

**HYMN OF PRAISE** “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus” *LSB* 821

1 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus;
 His the scepter, His the throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph,
 His the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion
 Thunder like a mighty flood:
“Jesus out of ev’ry nation
 Has redeemed us by His blood.”

2 Alleluia! Not as orphans
 Are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! He is near us;
 Faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received Him
 When the forty days were o’er,
Shall our hearts forget His promise:
 “I am with you evermore”?

3 Alleluia! Bread of heaven,
 Here on earth our food, our stay;
Alleluia! Here the sinful
 Flee to You from day to day.
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
 Earth’s Redeemer, hear our plea
Where the songs of all the sinless
 Sweep across the crystal sea.

4 Alleluia! King eternal,
 Lord omnipotent we own;
Alleluia! Born of Mary,
 Earth Your footstool, heav’n Your throne.
As within the veil You entered,
 Robed in flesh, our great High Priest,
Here on earth both priest and victim
 In the eucharistic feast.

5 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus;
 His the scepter, His the throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph,
 His the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion
 Thunder like a mighty flood:
“Jesus out of ev’ry nation
 Has redeemed us by His blood.”

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**SALUTATION AND PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray, 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.

**People: Amen.**

**OLD TESTAMENT READING** *Isaiah 56:1, 6–8*

1Thus says the LORD:

“Keep justice, and do righteousness,

for soon my salvation will come,

and my deliverance be revealed.

6“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,

to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,

and to be his servants,

everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,

and holds 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.”

8The Lord GOD,

who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,

“I will gather yet others to him

besides those already gathered.”

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

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

1I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

13Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry 14in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. 15For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

28As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. 29For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30Just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

311so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.

32For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**HOLY GOSPEL** *Matthew 15:21–28*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the fifteenth chapter.

**People: Glory to You, O Lord.**

21 Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

22And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” 23But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out 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.” 26And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread 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, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY** “Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness” *LSB* 849

1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness
 With a liberating light;
Praise the One who frees the pris’ners,
 Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the Gospel,
 Healing ev’ry dread disease,
Calming storms, and feeding thousands
 With the very Bread of peace.

2 Praise the One who blessed the children
 With a strong, yet gentle, word;
Praise the One who drove out demons
 With the piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water
 To the desert’s burning sand;
From this Well comes living water,
 Quenching thirst in ev’ry land.

3 Let us praise the Word Incarnate,
 Christ, who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose victorious
 That we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
 Seeing what our God has done;
Let us praise the true Redeemer,
 Praise the One who makes us one.

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**SERMON**

**Have you noticed that dog food isn’t just plain old brown crunchy tidbits anymore? Dog food used to be either canned brown sludge or hard, crunchy, brown, dusty nuggets. Some dog food required you to put water on it to make gravy, or hey, remember Gaines-Burgers — individually wrapped patties that were shaped like raw hamburger?**

**Nowadays, it apparently takes a scientist to create dog food. It has vegetables in it, carries nutrition labeling and sometimes is even in the fresh-food section.**

**We have become very particular about what we feed our dogs, haven’t we? And most people don’t give their dogs table scraps anymore because it just isn’t good for them.**

            While we aren’t sure what the family pet ate back in Jesus’ time, we know there were no Gaines-Burger, Gravy Train or Science Diet products in sight. Household dogs ate food offered from the master’s table. But in scripture references, a dog is usually not mentioned as a faithful family pet, and today’s scripture is no exception. Most dogs back in that day roamed the streets, scavenging for food. For the most part, a dog’s life wasn’t easy.

            What’s more, “dog” was a term that Jews used for Gentiles. It wasn’t exactly a compliment.

            Did Jesus call this Canaanite, Gentile woman in today’s scripture a dog? No, but the way Jews viewed her people probably led her to feel as though she would be perceived that way by Jesus and his disciples. In fact, when she first called out to Jesus, he ignored her. And, we are told, the disciples wanted to be rid of her, this non-Jewish pest of a woman. She was being a nuisance to them, so they asked Jesus to send her away.

Do we ever feel that way? Are there people we consider a bother? We may help them, but we really don’t feel much compassion for them, and when we do help, we wonder why they don’t appreciate it or don’t embrace our faith or come to our church. Maybe they can tell we don’t really care about them — we feel compelled to help, so we do, but we do it grudgingly.

            And what about Jesus? In this incident, he doesn’t seem to fit the image of him that we’ve developed from almost every other incident in the Gospels. In those stories, he appears caring and willing to take time even for “the least of these.” Here, however, Jesus seems not to care about this woman and her sick daughter, as if he’s being ... well, *un*-Christlike. And the story does not explain his behavior.

            From what the story does tell us, we can speculate that he was testing the woman to see if she had enough faith for him to actually perform the miracle she was requesting. It’s also possible that he was showing respect for this woman by verbally sparring with her the way rabbis did with one another. Maybe he was helping her to see the strength in her own faith and persistence, to recognize the power in it so she could draw on it later. It might even be that he spoke to this woman as he did to make a point to his disciples, who were witnessing this encounter.

            It would, perhaps, have been simpler to just heal her daughter and send the woman on her way, but what would his disciples have learned? How many times have we given the quick and easy solution to a need for ministry? Perhaps we throw money at a problem that would be better helped by our personal attention. How many times have we texted, emailed or tweeted someone when a call or visit would have better met a hurting person’s needs?

            But whatever was going on, Jesus did eventually do as the woman asked.

            We see from the story that this non-Jewish woman addressed Jesus as “Lord, Son of David.” She apparently acknowledged him as the Messiah even as many of his own people scoffed at that title.

            And she had faith that Jesus could heal her daughter. So when Jesus did not respond to her first entreaty, she pushed forward, knelt before him and repeated her plea. Being a Gentile, she likely came with no sense of entitlement — not as though Jesus owed her a healing, not as his equal. Even when Jesus suggested he had come “only to the lost sheep of … Israel” (a belief his own disciples embraced) and said, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs,” she accepted the insult — if that’s what it was — and responded, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

            In so saying, she claimed a spot in his household, even if it had to be a second-class position, or even as a dog under the family table. She was willing to accept any scrap he would throw her way — just a moment of his time.

            As biblical commentator Alexander Maclaren says, “She does not ask a place at the table, nor anything taken from those who have a prior claim to a more abundant share in his mercies. A crumb is enough for her, which they will never miss.”1

            In this entitled life most of us lead, we might be more than a little offended at this point. In her position, we might have said, “Lord, I’m not less than anyone else. I have as much right to be treated right and to be blessed as anyone else does!”

            But this woman does not get upset. Instead, she persists with her request. And why? Because she loves her daughter and expects Jesus to heal the child — not because of who *she* is, but because of who *he* is!

            She knows that to these Jews traveling with Jesus, she *is*, at best, like a dog under a table and that she has no claim on Jesus’ presence, his time or his care. But she also has faith that even a crumb will be enough to meet her need and heal her daughter. She is truly humble. And Jesus tells her and the disciples, “Woman, great is your faith.” Now they have seen what great faith really is. And he heals her daughter — just like that.

            **So here are two questions for us:**

**First, how often do we attempt to lay a healing on someone from afar — a quick fix when a full conversation or relationship would be better? We can tell from this passage that Jesus doesn’t do that! Who said you can either throw a fish at a man or teach him to fish for himself? Nobody has ever taught a man to fish with a checkbook and a roll of stamps. Sometimes, you have get in there and apply the healing personally, talk it through, help strengthen the person for another day.**

**And second, is our faith strong enough to believe that even a crumb from Jesus’ table is enough? Or do we believe that only the Science Diet, full-blown, fresh-from-the-meat-case-and-lobster-tank version is good enough for us because we are the best kind of church-going, Jesus-following, devotion-reading, tithing, serving humans there are? Are we more entitled to God’s blessings than other people are? Does Jesus love everyone or just us “good” Christians? And if you say, “No, of course Jesus loves everybody equally,” you’re right!**

**So, of course we should behave toward others as if we believe that.**

**And one more thing: The 19th-century writer Samuel Butler said, “The greatest pleasure of a dog is that you may make a fool of yourself with him, and not only will he not scold you, but he will make a fool of himself, too.”**

**So perhaps we can lead a kind of dog’s life for Jesus — content with whatever blessings he bestows on us and willing to make fools of ourselves for him. If you think the things you might do with him, for him or about him make you look foolish, you can be okay knowing that he has already done good things for you that many over the course of 2,000 years have seen as foolish.**

**Make Jesus your master and enjoy life with a faith that is so strong, you can accept whatever Christ gives you, in Jesus name, Amen!**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** *Nicene Creed*

**People: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

Let us pray to the Lord for all that we need and on behalf of all people, that He may bestow upon us the riches of His grace and that we may receive His gifts with faith and thanksgiving in our hearts.

For true unity in the faith; for the preservation of pure doctrine; for harmony in the lives of our congregation, district and Synod; and for charitable hearts that put the best construction on what we see and hear, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those outside the kingdom; for missionaries near and far; for the ministries and agencies of our Church whereby the Gospel is spoken to those who have not heard; and for those who hear, that they may be brought to faith, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all pastors and church workers, for those preparing for full-time church work, and for those considering church-work vocations, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all families, for husbands and wives to live in faithfulness to each other, for all mothers with child, for all children, and for those who bring them to Baptism and nurture them in the faith, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our president; the Congress; our governor; all elected and appointed leaders; all judges and magistrates; the members of the armed forces; and our police, firefighters and emergency medical personnel in their duties to protect and serve us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the healing of the sick, the relief of the suffering, the comfort of the grieving and the peace of the dying, *[especially* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,]* and for those who care for them in their afflictions, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all honest work and occupations, for our good use of the fruits of our labors, for generosity for those in need, and for the tithes and offerings that accompany our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord God, giver of all that is good, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your grace, that we may endure the changes and chances of this mortal life and be found worthy when our Savior comes to bring to completion all things; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER** *Matthew 6:9–13*

**People:** **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.**

**BENEDICTION**

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace. *Numbers 6:24–26*

**People: Amen.**

**HYMN** “Christ Be My Leader” *LSB* 861

1 Christ be my Leader by night as by day;
Safe through the darkness, for He is the way.
Gladly I follow, my future His care,
Darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.

2 Christ be my Teacher in age as in youth,
Drifting or doubting, for He is the truth.
Grant me to trust Him; though shifting as sand,
Doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.

3 Christ be my Savior in calm as in strife;
Death cannot hold me, for He is the life.
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its stain
Can touch my salvation: with Jesus I reign.

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