**MODIFIED SERVICE- 11TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST- August 16, 2020**

**ZION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, PHLIPSBURG**

Welcome to everyone on this 11th Sunday of Pentecost, where we continue to gather safely from the comfort of our homes as a reminder of our love for one another.

I am back from holidays. Greg and I spent a few days at a friend’s cottage on Colpoy’s Bay near Wiarton. We had gorgeous weather and lovely views of the water and sunsets, reminding of God’s love for creation in the beauty that surrounds us in these times. However, it is good to be back in the saddle again. Our GotoMeeting Coffee hour resumes today at 11:00, please join us!

Please remember that Zion relies on your continued support each week to meet our monthly expenses. Thank you to all who support and pray for our congregation.

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

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. **Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN- Oh, Praise the Gracious Power- ELW 651**

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8**

 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.

The word of the Lord.

**PSALM: Psalm 67**

 1May God be merciful to us and bless us; may the light of God’s face shine upon us.
 2Let 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.
 4Let 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.
 6The 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**

A reading from Romans.

[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. 2aGod 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.

The word of the Lord.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 15:[10-20] 21-28**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

[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.

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

Have you ever had a mental block, knowing that you had to get something done and it just was not happening? That was me this week because I think I wrote 5 different sermons in my head for today! I would think I had the right trajectory of where I wanted to go, then something else would pop into my brain, and this happened day after day. Now maybe it was because I was on holidays last week and it was taking me a little while to get back into preaching mode, but I do not think that was not the only reason I was having issues. Now do not get me wrong, I love this reading, I love the content and emotion, but there is almost too much going on, leaving too much that I could preach on, but more importantly, at least for me, was the thought that Jesus just didn’t seem to act very caring when the unnamed Canaanite woman approached him that day. He basically brushed her aside. Why would Jesus initially do this? Was he having a bad day or was there more going on here than meets the eye?

 In looking for answers to some of my questions I did some research to provide some background to our reading today, in hopes of clearing up some of the confusion of why Jesus acted the way he did. I did not want to make up excuses for Jesus’ actions but perhaps shed some light on the culture in antiquity that would lead to this behaviour.

 Jesus and the disciples have been continuing their travels leaving the safer and well-known regions of the Sea of Galilee and Gennesaret. They have now traveled to the foreign location of Tyre and Sidon. He was not in Kansas anymore so to speak. In going to these locales, they had entered non-Jewish territory, so he and the disciples would have been considered outsiders. Many would not have known who they were. In the eyes of Jewish law speaking to a Gentile, and a woman at that, in public, would have left them defiled and unclean in retrospect to the literality of the law.

 The woman was an outsider simply because of her gender. She was so unimportant that she did not even deserve a name in Scripture. She also violated the social norms of the times by getting the attention of the disciples and Jesus in the first place. Even though she was a Gentile who likely worshipped Herod, she knew exactly who Jesus was. She had probably heard how he healed the sick, and when she saw him, it gave her hope that her daughter could be healed. She was a desperate mother and felt she had nothing to lose, so she shouted out and cried to Jesus in a loud voice saying “*Kyrie Eleison!”* “Have mercy on me Lord, Son of David, my daughter is tormented by demons.” This nameless woman, this Gentile begs and pleads for the mercy of Jesus Christ to heal her daughter, but she does so with honour calling him Lord and Son of David. She simply wants to be seen and heard. What parent or loved one would not do the same thing?

 But when she cries out to Jesus, he is silent…and this was what was disconcerting to me. Jesus, the one who calls us to love our neighbour, the one who embraces tax collectors and sinners and strangers, the one who heals the sick; does not answer her, he is silent. And when he does speak, he states that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. But this does not stop the woman however, she persisted and goes so far as to kneel at his feet, where Jesus then promptly calls her a dog. Her response…. “Yes, Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” That right there folks is a proverbial mic drop if I have ever heard one!

 Perhaps Jesus realizes it as well, and maybe his silence was meant to be a learning opportunity, maybe it was an opportunity for self-reflection where he began to realize his true mission in the world. God did not only send him to the lost sheep of Israel, God sent him to all of the lost sheep in all of the world. His mission was far greater than he realized, his mission was to show God’s abundant love for everyone, where grace and mercy is made known for all, where all are beloved children of God

 How often do we let biases control our lives? How often do we dismiss or exclude someone who does not think like us, act like us, or look like us? How often do we take the time to reflect on how we treat one another? How often are we silent when we should be speaking up?

 The unnamed Canaanite woman in our gospel reading today is a remarkable woman of strength and persistence. She pushed Jesus into new territory helping him to understand the need to love everyone as a neighbour, she was not asking for any special privilege, only that he heal her daughter, only that he accept her as a child of God.

 In our first reading from Isaiah this morning, the prophet reminds us saying let us maintain justice by loving and being in relationship with our neighbour, let us do what is right in speaking up and out, in shouting our own *kyrie eleison,* our own Lord, have mercy! Let us know that the loving arms of God are big enough to hold all in God’s care, offering freedom, hope, and healing in a world that is full of pain, sorrow, and brokenness. Let us know that God is here, working in, through and around us, offering courage and persistence in the times when we think we are alone and weak.

 Jesus showed his humanity in his initial treatment of the Canaanite woman, he was as I like to say most weeks perfectly imperfect. In that moment Jesus may well have learned something about his own faith and theology. The Canaanite woman’s faith gave Jesus an opportunity to see his own faith grow. May we too use this as an opportunity to learn more about ourselves and let love and kindness be our guide filling all hearts with acceptance and compassion. Amen

**HYMN OF THE DAY- Healer of Our Every Ill- ELW 612**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwBewCxunL0>

**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.

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 divided by power, greed and 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 and outsiders in our villages, cities, and towns, and for those who need your healing especially Eddie, Elaine, Susie, Ruth, Mary Ann, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, the people of Beirut, all who have been affected by hurricanes and torrential weather this week and those we name in the stillness of our hearts.. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In you we live and move and have our being. Grant our congregation of Zion Lutheran church grace to find our life refreshed and restored in you. Accompany us in the rhythms of late summer and in this time pandemic. Give us rest and renewal and strengthen us for mission in your name. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray.

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God the creator, + Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. Amen.

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING HYMN- In Christ There is No East or West- ELW 650**

From sundaysandseasons.com.

Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.