

Alleluia, alleluia! / Jesus preached the Good News of the kingdom / and healed all who were sick. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 15:21-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Woman, you have great faith.

Jesus left Gennesaret and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' But he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give her what she wants,' they said 'because she is shouting after us.' He said in reply. 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.' But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs.' She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

20 AUGUST 2023

GOD OPEN TO NEW WAYS

For the people of Israel, Isaiah's words about all nations coming to worship in Jerusalem would have been a source of great disquiet, consternation, and surprise. Surely, they were the chosen people and as such stood apart from the nations that surrounded them. It is perhaps difficult for us to imagine their horror at the idea that Gentiles would have the effrontery to worship in the Lord's own temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah goes further and points out that all this will happen with God's blessing.

Paul speaks at a time when Gentiles had come to accept Jesus, but many Jews had not. His problem was to work out how this possibly fits into the tapestry of God's saving plan. He came to see that by means of Israel's non-acceptance, a way was opened for the Gentiles. This would serve as a prompt for other Jews to accept Jesus and so pave the way for the general resurrection of the dead.

The Canaanite woman shouting out to Jesus clearly unhinged the disciples. In the first place, they were in Gentile territory, in the second place she was advertising to all and sundry that Jesus and his companions were Jewish, in the third place Jesus seemed to be turning a deaf ear to the woman's request. Ultimately both the disciples, and Matthew's readers must come to terms with the fact that faith, and God's response to it, recognises no boundaries. The loving mother's persistence and faith will have its just reward.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Isa 56:1, 6-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I will lead the foreigners to my holy mountain.

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice, act with integrity, for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest.

Foreigners who have attached themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love his name and be his servants – all who observe the sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain. I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their holocausts and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 66:2-3, 5-6, 8. R. v. 8

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

- O God, be gracious and bless us / and let your face shed its light upon us. / So will your ways be known upon earth / and all nations learn your saving help. **R.**
- Let the nations be glad and exult / for you rule the world with justice. / With fairness you rule the peoples, / you guide the nations on earth. **R.**
- Let the peoples praise you, O God; / let all the peoples praise you. / May God still give us his blessing / till the ends of the earth revere him. **R.**



SECOND READING

Rom 11:13-15, 29-32

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

The gifts and call of God are irrevocable.

Let me tell you pagans this: I have been sent to the pagans as their apostle, and I am proud of being sent, but the purpose of it is to make my own people envious of you, and in this way save some of them. Since their rejection meant the reconciliation of the world, do you know what their admission will mean? Nothing less than a resurrection from the dead! God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice.

Just as you changed from being disobedient to God, and now enjoy mercy because of their disobedience, so those who are disobedient now – and only because of the mercy shown to you – will also enjoy mercy eventually. God has imprisoned all men in their own disobedience only to show mercy to all mankind.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

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