



# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 16, 2020

*We are still the body of Christ even though we are unable to gather for public worship during this time of world-wide crisis. While we cannot be together in person around our Lord's Table, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer.*

*Isaiah proclaims 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 of Nazareth heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our congregation extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and prayer, we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.*

## Prelude

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

arr. Max Drischner  
(1891-1971)

## Hymn

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*



1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre - a - tion!  
2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won-drous-ly reign - ing  
3 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de - fend you;  
4 Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me a - dore him!



O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and sal - va - tion!  
and, as on wings of an ea - gle, up - lift - ing, sus - tain - ing.  
sure - ly his good - ness and mer - cy shall dai - ly at - tend you.  
All that has life and breath, come now with prais - es be - fore him!



Let all who hear now to his tem - ple draw near,  
Have you not seen all that is need - ful has been  
Pon - der a - new what the Al - might - y can do  
Let the a - men sound from his peo - ple a - gain.



join - ing in glad ad - o - ra - tion!  
sent by his gra - cious or - dain - ing?  
if with his love he be - friend you.  
Glad - ly for - ev - er a - dore him!

## Apostolic Greeting

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

## Prayer of the Day

*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 Lord. Amen*

## WE GATHER AROUND THE FONT, THE WORD, AND THE PRAYERS



A small group of family and Holy Trinity members gathered last Sunday to welcome Alexander David Harris-Shaw, son of Keri (Jones) and Justin Harris-Shaw, into our fellowship through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

## First Lesson - 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.*

Thus says the LORD:

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

<sup>6</sup>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,  
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,  
and hold fast my covenant —

<sup>7</sup>these 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.

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

## Psalm 67

*This psalm is a prayer for God's graciousness and saving power, and a bidding of praise by all people for God's justice and bounty.*

May God be merciful to us and bless us,  
show us the light of his countenance, and come to us.  
<sup>2</sup>Let your ways be known upon earth,  
your saving health among all nations.  
<sup>3</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you.  
<sup>4</sup>Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations upon earth.  
<sup>5</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you.  
<sup>6</sup>The earth has brought forth her increase;  
may God, our own God, give us his blessing.  
<sup>7</sup>May God give us his blessing,  
and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe of him.

## Second Lesson - 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.*

Paul writes: I 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. <sup>2</sup>God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. <sup>29</sup>For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. <sup>32</sup>For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

## Holy Gospel - Matthew 15:21-28

*Jesus of Nazareth 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 pagan and unclean approaches him for help.*

<sup>21</sup>Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>Just 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." <sup>23</sup>But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." <sup>24</sup>He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." <sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." <sup>26</sup>He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup>She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.



## Sermon

It is an understatement to say that the first five months of our seemingly endless coronavirus pandemic have been a time of upheaval, challenge, and new experiences. For the sake of community health, our world has undergone a number of abrupt changes since mid-March: we have started wearing

face masks, washing our hands frequently, and staying home a lot; millions have lost their jobs; schools have been forced to shift to distance learning; more doctors and medical care providers have started offering patient care remotely through telemedicine; a number of professionals such as engineers, lawyers, and many others have been working from home; and, yes, houses of worship have regrouped and retooled to provide worship, fellowship, education, and meeting opportunities through virtual formats. In ways large and small, from large organizations to individual households, the ways we go about our daily lives have changed – often with a steep learning curve as we navigate so much uncertainty. Yet, we have grown in our understanding and abilities, learning new coping skills and ways of doing things.

Navigating a steep learning curve and growth in understanding is what we see unfolding in today's gospel reading as we hear the account of Jesus of Nazareth's encounter with the Canaanite woman. There have been many interpretive attempts to sanitize this story about Jesus' interaction with this persistent unnamed woman – who is multi-faceted trouble in the context of ancient, Near-Eastern Jewish culture. She's a Canaanite, a woman, and she has a demon-tormented daughter, among other things. Yet, she goes against social and religious norms in a quest for healing for her child. She speaks up and seeks mercy from this man she calls "Son of David," not knowing what his response will be. She takes a stand, a risk, and crosses a boundary.

In Jesus' initial response to this woman's shouted request, we see his humanity on full display – warts and all – as he first *ignores* the woman. His disciples urge him to send her away. His first verbal response is even more embarrassing: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," says Jesus, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Having none of it, the woman comes back at him: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." That verbal smack-upside-the-head gets his attention and the light bulb goes on, as he navigates his steep learning curve and answers her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

This maligned "outsider" knew something about God – that God's mercy and love and generosity and healing are for **ALL** people. She schools Jesus – or as the old saying goes, she "learns him a thing or two" – about how his view of the "other" is shaped by his culture – a culture built on racial, ethnic, religious, geographical, and gender hierarchies and boundaries. She challenges his narrow way of understanding people – a way that prevents him from seeing her full humanity and her desperate circumstances as she kneels in front of him. Because of this close encounter, Jesus changes his mind. He grows in his awareness and understanding as the Canaanite woman helps him see that her life matters. This new awareness then shapes the future of his mission and ministry.

Jesus had a learning curve – and so do we. This story challenges **US** to consider who the "Canaanite women" are in our world, for we, too, can be blind to the humanity and the needs of people who are not like us – people who do not look, or think, or talk, or worship like us. How many times in our lives are we

like the disciples, trying to ignore or minimize or send away the rather inconvenient problems that present themselves in our community, our Commonwealth, our nation, our world? How often do we sidestep someone who is crying out to us for help? Do we sometimes get a little defensive or even offended when someone else points out injustice to us? Like Jesus, we can get things wrong. We can make negative generalizations about whole groups of people based on one encounter, or on the basis of prejudices or biases we may harbor – and not even know it. Like Jesus, **WE** can be changed and transformed in our thinking and behavior, too.

Part of our Christian journey, part of our calling through our baptism into our Lord's death and resurrection, is to listen to those people calling out in pain or hunger or torment or anger. They may be the poor, the marginalized, the economically downtrodden, those discriminated against because of race or religion. Our calling is to be attuned to their needs, to meet them where they are, to let them speak to us on their own terms. What they have to say to us may sound as jarring as the fierce Canaanite woman's bold, "Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." We may hear things that shake our worldview and challenge our assumptions.

Some today may feel like they are the Canaanite woman – crying out for justice, for equality, for inclusion, for healing, for racial reconciliation, for peace – crying out to be heard, seemingly to no avail. The message of today's gospel for those people is be not afraid. Take heart. Don't apologize for your persistence. God hears you and, even in times of struggle and doubt, God proclaims your faith to be great.

You see, God has this amazing ability to bring about change in the most astonishing ways – even on a cross. God has this amazing ability to change the world through the most unexpected people. God's work in our lives is always surprising us, always jarring us, always shaking up our worldview. God makes abundance out of scarcity. God is constantly taking the scraps from our table, the crumbs that we discard, and turning them into a feast – a feast to which **ALL** are invited. As baptized children of God, we are called to live out this grace by building bigger tables rather than higher walls. After all, each of us is equidistant from the heart of God.

As we have learned – and continue to learn – in this time of pandemic, each of us has a learning curve. May we learn from the "Canaanite women" of the world who, through their perseverance and their outspokenness, give us a glimpse of **GOD'S** vision for the human family – a world where grace comes to us in the most unexpected ways because of the wideness of God's mercy, where the smallest and "least of these" speak with the loudest voices and the powerful act with humility, where soup kitchens become lavish banquet halls. It's a world transformed by the death and resurrection of our Lord, where death and the grave are defeated. It's a world in which we are given **ABUNDANT LIFE** for the sake of **ALL**, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

## There's a Wideness in God's Mercy



- 1 There's a wide-ness
- 2 There is wel-come
- 3 For the love of
- 4 'Tis not all we



in God's mer - cy, like the wide - ness of the sea;  
for the sin - ner, and a prom - ised grace made good;  
God is broad - er than the mea - sures of our mind;  
owe to Je - sus; it is some - thing more than all:



there's a kind - ness in God's jus - tice which is more than  
there is mer - cy with the Sav - ior; there is heal - ing  
and the heart of the E - ter - nal is most won - der -  
great - er good be - cause of e - vil, larg - er mer - cy



lib - er - ty. There is no place where earth's sor - rows  
in his blood. There is grace e - nough for thou - sands  
ful - ly kind. But we make this love too nar - row  
through the fall. Make our love, O God, more faith - ful;



are more felt than up in heav'n. There is no place  
of new worlds as great as this; there is room for  
by false lim - its of our own; and we mag - ni -  
let us take you at your word, and our lives will



where earth's fail - ings have such kind - ly judg - ment giv'n.  
fresh cre - a - tions in that up - per home of bliss.  
fy its strict - ness with a zeal God will not own.  
be thanks - giv - ing for the good - ness of the Lord.

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## **The Prayers**

Confident of your care, O God, 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. Inspire in us a spirit of respect for the world's religions, and wisdom concerning the many houses of prayer.

You have blessed us with the bounty of the earth. Grant your grace to all your creatures, that the earth will flourish. Help us relieve waters choked by garbage, renew soils stripped of nutrients, and refresh the air all creatures need to live.

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.

We pray for all in need of healing, for the residents of Beirut and other distressed cities, for those suffering from hurricane damage, for those sick and dying of COVID-19, for the unemployed, for people without medical care, for medical workers and researchers, for the outcasts and marginalized of our society.

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.

We mourn the deaths of those we love, and we praise you for the lives of all your faithful people. At the end, gather us all into the joy of your presence.

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

## **WE WORSHIP WITH OUR OFFERINGS**

The needs of Holy Trinity's mission and ministry are ongoing during these times of upheaval and turmoil. Many of our outreach ministry partnerships are facing increased requests for services. May we be faithful and generous as we support our mission "to care actively in the name of Jesus Christ."

Offerings may be mailed to the church or dropped off at the church office.

You may also use the online giving portal on our website.

Go to [www.holytrinitylynchburg.org](http://www.holytrinitylynchburg.org) and click on "Give."

You may also download the "GivePlus Church" app for your smart phone from Apple or Google.

## **Offertory Prayer**

*Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us – our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

## **Lord's Prayer**

*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**

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen

**Dismissal**

Our service now begins. Go in peace. Serve the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**Postlude**

Toccatina on *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

arr. J. William Greene



*The altar flowers are given to the glory of God  
by Marjorie Huiner  
in memory of Harvey Huiner.*



*The candles are given to the glory of God  
by Mary and Bob Lightle  
in celebration of their seventy-third wedding anniversary  
and with thanksgiving for all their many blessings.*

***Our Mission: "To care actively in the name of Jesus Christ."***

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