

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Church Lives Under the Cross of Christ and Prays in the Hope of His Mercy



Background: This Sunday should probably be called “Salute to Gentiles Sunday”, which is probably most of us. At Jesus time, Jewish people including Christ’s disciples thought of themselves as God’s chosen people. Even though Isaiah clearly stated that Gentiles are welcomed in the kingdom of God and to worship in the temple, somehow Jews thought of themselves as the only people chosen by God (God did make Israel a great nation) In the Gospel, Christ first feigned the Jewish thought process by ignoring a Canaanite women asking Christ to

Christ and the Canaanite Woman Pietersz Lastman 1617 save her daughter from a demon possessing her. In good Jewish tradition at that time, the disciples asked Christ to send her away. (In tradition neither women or children or gentiles (like this Canaanite) had status in society and were not allowed into the temple itself. Christ finally showed up the disciples by telling the lady—“It is not proper to take children’s bread and feed it to the dogs!”) The woman’s response “Even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from its master’s table” Jesus response “I have not seen such faith in all of Israel” and granted her plea. The lesson Christ was trying to prove by going in Canaanite gentile territory, was to spread his plan of salvation to Gentiles. How fortunate we are to recognize that God came to save all mankind. That is one reason we joyfully support a Lutheran Bible translator to the Kwei people in Botswana and ministers in Ecuador as a congregation. Blessings to all as we consider how to reach out to the unchurched near and far from us.

The Lessons: Isaiah 56:1, 6–8, Romans 11:1–2a, 13–15, 28–32, Matthew 15:21–28

By her persistent prayer that Jesus would have mercy and help her (Matt. 15:22, 24), and even in the face of His initial silence and apparent rejection (Matt. 15:23–26), the Canaanite woman boldly confessed her faith in Him (Matt. 15:27–28). Her beautiful example encourages us to cling to the words and promises of the Gospel, even in the face of the Law that accuses and condemns us. “*For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*” (Rom. 11:29), and His Law “*has consigned all to disobedience*” for the very purpose “*that he may have mercy on all*” (Rom. 11:32). Hence, the woman’s faith and hope were not disappointed, but her prayers were answered in the mercy of Christ. Not only does He grant us the crumbs from His table, but He also feeds us with “*the children’s bread*” in the house of His Father (Matt. 15:26–27). He has brought us to His “*holy mountain,*” and He makes us joyful in His house, where He hears our prayers and accepts our sacrifice of praise upon the altar of His cross (Is. 56:7).