

Lectionary Bible Study Our Savior Lutheran Church

Lectionary 20

Readings Readings and Psalm

Isaiah 56, 1, 6-8; Psalm 67;

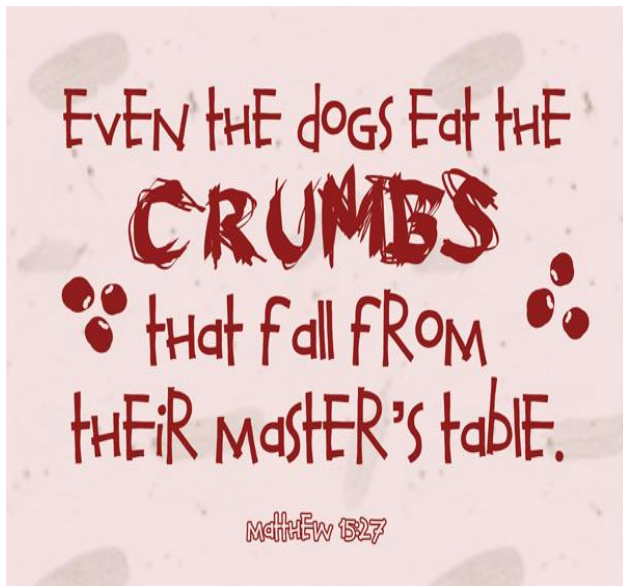
Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15, (10-20) 21-28

[Click here](#) to join Pastor Mark for a Live Zoom conversation each Wednesday at 10am.

Meeting ID: 868 8793 0554

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Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28 (NRSV)

¹⁰ Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: ¹¹ it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." ¹² Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" ¹³ He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." ¹⁵ But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." ¹⁶ Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷ Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.")

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

At the time of Jesus, it was important for those who followed the Jewish faith to remain ritually pure. Consequently, the Pharisees and scribes were quite upset when the disciples of Jesus would not wash their hands before they would eat. But Jesus challenged the Pharisees concerning what made a person clean or unclean by saying, "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." Time and time again, Jesus emphasized what was in the heart of the person. That core principle allowed Jesus to

respond to people based on their faith and not based on exterior factors.

1. *What does the phrase “in the heart of the person” mean?*
2. *Give examples of times when Jesus responded to someone based on their heart rather than exterior factors.*

Immediately following the teaching about ritual cleanliness, Jesus takes his followers into foreign - unclean - territory, near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. And in this unclean place a most unconventional thing happens. A foreign (gasp!) woman (horrors!) comes alone (unthinkable!) and speaks (outrageous!) to the disciples and won't obey (scandalous!) their instruction to stop following them (shocking!).

3. *Why do you think Jesus seems at first to ignore the woman? Is this a typical reaction of Jesus?*
4. *How does the woman respond to Jesus' initial silence?*

The disciples wanted Jesus to send her away so she would not bother them any more. She was an “outsider” who didn't seem to know or accept her place. This woman – who was declared by society and Jewish law to not have a voice – chose to use her voice to cry to Jesus repeatedly. This incident is a beautiful illustration of the teaching Jesus has just made. Outwardly, this woman has nothing about her that is “clean.” But she has two things in her heart that make her right with God:

- her unwavering, persistent care for her daughter; and,
- her unwavering, persistent trust that Jesus can cure her daughter.

And these two things cause Jesus to undergo a change of heart himself.

5. *Do you think her unwavering, persistent care and trust caused Jesus to have a change of heart?*
6. *Or, do you think Jesus was baiting her into a conversation so as to further teach his disciples.*

If only we knew the tone of Jesus voice (and that of the woman for that matter). Were they serious, argumentative, playful? Reading the exchanges between them in different ways may offer different perspectives.

7. *What do you make of the somewhat puzzling remark of Jesus that “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*
8. *What do you make of the second equally puzzling remark that “It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs?”*

Showing continued perseverance for the sake of her daughter, the woman was willing to accept just crumbs from Jesus for even crumbs would be sufficient to heal her daughter. Despite the odds against her, this woman's inner qualities of humility and faithfulness shined enough to prompt Jesus to pay her the highest of compliments.

9. *What makes faith great?*