

**ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER  
PENTECOST**

*A Service of the Word  
August 16, 2020*



**ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**85 East Brandt Boulevard**  
**Landisville, PA 17538**

*United in Christ,  
we are called to love and serve.*

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## *Service of the Word*

*August 16, 2020*



*P: Pastor    A: Assisting Minister    C: Congregation & Pastor*

### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PRELUDE**

*Pastorale*

D. Dicie

### † THE GATHERING †

*The Holy Spirit gathers us in unity on the first day of the week,  
the day of Christ's resurrection.*

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: God of all nations, your name is loved and holy in many languages. Yet nowhere in the world is your justice perfectly maintained and what is right always done. We confess that we do not worship you in complete allegiance to your covenant with us nor in loving openness to all people of all nations, of all races, of all customs, and of all conditions. We forget the mercy you have shown us in our time of misbehavior, and we do not share your readiness to show mercy to those who are now disobedient. Forgive us for the sake of your all-loving Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

*Silence for brief reflection.*

P: Friends in Christ: It is God's purpose to show mercy to *all* humanity. So hear the good News! Jesus Christ has made a covenant with us which is irrevocable. Believe that Good News, friends. Believe that in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.

*(Verse 1)*

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!  
Let all who hear now to his temple draw near,  
joining in glad adoration!

*(Verse 2)*

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is wondrously reigning  
and, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining.  
Have you not seen all that is needful has been  
sent by his gracious ordaining?

*(Verse 3)*

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;  
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.  
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do  
if with his love he befriend you.

*(Verse 4)*

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore him!  
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him!  
Let the amen sound from his people again.  
Gladly forever adore him!

**THE GREETING**

P: 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**

P: Gracious God, heal our souls so we may be saved from our doubts and know the healing of faith that restores us and all those to whom you send us to spread your word and compassion, regardless of nations, conditions, or relationships. Though Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

## † THE WORD †

*God speaks to us in Scriptures read and preached.*

### FIRST READING

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

A: A reading from Isaiah.

Thus says the LORD: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil.

Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and do not let the eunuch say, “I am just a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 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— 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. Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

A: The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

### SECOND READING

Romans 11:2a, 29-32

A: A reading from Romans.

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. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

A: The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

## GOSPEL READING

Matthew 15:10-28

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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

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

P: The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

## SERMON

Pastor Barbara Caruana

P: *God's grace and peace be with all of you.*

*Amen.*

I hate today's gospel story. I really do. I can't, for the life of me, make sense of what Jesus says and does in this story. He says, "It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it's what comes out of the mouth that defiles." What he's done by saying that is shut down the notion that what we eat determines whether

we are clean or unclean. Then ... he asserts that what we say, what comes out of our mouths, is what can defile us. I understand that part.

And then ... Jesus turns around and encounters a woman begging for help, and he says, "It's not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." I can't believe what just came out of Jesus' mouth!! Let me give you all a warning, because I'm about ready to say something you may think is offensive. But here it is. Jesus just compared the woman to a female dog ... and you know what a female dog is called!!

The disciples are bad enough. They tell Jesus, "Send this woman away. She's being too loud, she's bothering us." But then Jesus, even Jesus, Son of God, Savior of the World, tells her, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

When I hear this story, the cruelty of it staggers me. I simply can't understand why Jesus would say this. There are some pastors who will sweep this encounter under the rug. Jesus came to the lost sheep of Israel, the Jewish people, and not to Gentiles like this Canaanite woman.

But in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus heals lepers, who were considered unclean. He helps a centurion, a Roman officer, when the centurion asks for help. So why not this Canaanite woman? Some pastors will say this was a test. Jesus was testing the woman to see if she persisted, and then he gives her what she asks. But if Jesus is able to heal her daughter, why doesn't he just do so? Where's that compassion we hear so much about?

Some pastors will interpret this as a shared joke. Jesus is winking at the woman when he says, "It's not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs," and she is laughing back at him, saying, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

This interpretation rings hollow for me. To me, it sounds too much like all the times someone has said something hurtful and then said, "Just kidding!" I wasn't being offensive, I wasn't being cruel, I was just joking. Why can't you take a joke?

There are also pastors who will argue back and forth about Jesus in this story and what it means for our beliefs about Christ. Does Jesus sin? Is it possible for the Son of God to make a mistake? Is this encounter with the Canaanite woman a mistake, a failure, on Jesus' part? And if it's not a mistake, then what is it?

I don't know what Jesus is doing in this passage, in his encounter with the unnamed Canaanite woman. I can't make sense of it. So, let's talk about the woman, instead.

She has no name. All we know about her is that she is a Canaanite ... meaning not a Jew ... and she's a mother.

We know that Jesus came to her neighborhood, the "district of Tyre and Sidon." Jesus went into Canaanite territory, and a Canaanite woman sought him out.

She addresses Jesus with all the right language. "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!" She calls him Lord. She recognizes him as the heir of King David. She begs for mercy.

She's persistent. She shouts, she raises her voice, she refuses to give in. But what mother, what parent, wouldn't do the same? If you knew someone could save your child, would you ever quiet down?

Of course, there are words we use for people like her, and there are ways we dismiss them. She's shrill. She's annoying. "She keeps shouting after us," the disciples complain.

The Canaanite woman makes the disciples uncomfortable. She's a loud, demanding woman who just can't be patient and wait for salvation to come to her and her daughter? Don't people like her know that people respond better to polite requests than to desperate pleas? Can't she see Jesus is busy? Why is she interrupting?

The Canaanite woman is a mother with a sick child. So she's a force to be reckoned with. She won't be polite; she won't sit down and wait her turn; and she *will not* be dismissed. She gets right in Jesus' face and demands help.

The poet Jan Richardson wrote about this Canaanite woman in a poem called "*Stubborn Blessing*." I want to share it with you. And as I'm reading it, remember that I'm reading it as if I'm the Canaanite woman talking to Jesus. And she says:

"Don't tell me no.

I have seen you  
feed the thousands,  
seen miracles spill

from your hands  
like water, like wine,  
seen you with circles  
and circles of crowds  
pressed around you  
and not one soul  
turned away.

Don't start with me.

I'm saying  
you can close the door,  
but I'll keep knocking.  
You can go silent,  
but I'll keep shouting.  
You can tighten the circle,  
but I'll trace a bigger one  
around you,  
around the life of my child,  
who will tell you  
no one surpasses a mother  
for stubbornness.

I am saying  
I know what you  
can do with crumbs  
and I am claiming mine,  
every morsel and scrap  
you have up your sleeve.

Unclench your hand,  
and your heart.  
Let the scraps fall  
like manna,  
like mercy  
for the life  
of my child,  
the life of  
the world.



Don't you tell me no.  
Don't!

The Canaanite woman is both a particular woman and a universal woman. She's a particular woman, from a particular culture, with a particular need. But she's also every parent who has ever desperately sought help for their child. She's every parent who has ever raised a ruckus, refused to be quiet, refused to back down, because their child's life was on the line.

If you're a parent, I'm sure you can see yourself in the Canaanite woman. I hope you've never had to face a life-or-death situation for your children like she's facing. But I'm sure you can relate to her determination and stubbornness in getting what her child needs.

And all of us, even those like me, who have never been a parent (unless you count my dog as my child – which I do), can appreciate her passion. She will do whatever it takes to get what her child needs. She's even willing to abase herself, compare herself to a dog, if it gets Jesus to help her daughter: “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.”

The truth is, we *can* relate to the Canaanite woman. And yet, how often are we in the position of the disciples? We don't want to listen to someone make a fuss. We don't want to be inconvenienced or made uncomfortable by this loud, demanding woman. We look at the people begging for justice for their children and think, “Can't they stop shouting at us? Can't they just be patient and wait?”

The Canaanite woman couldn't wait. She just wouldn't wait. Her daughter needed her to get this healing, and she wasn't going to fail. She wasn't going to back down when the disciples complained. She wasn't going to be shamed or humiliated into silence, even by Jesus himself.

So, in the end, it's the faithfulness of this mother that inspires me in this story. It's amazing. The disciples disappoint me; Jesus confuses and frustrates me. But the Canaanite woman has enough faith to overcome all of that. Even Jesus admits it: “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And it was. Her daughter was healed. And to that I say, “Thanks be to God. Amen.”

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE**

*And Can it Be?*

Arr. by C. Campbell

## **APOSTLES' CREED**

**P:** We now proclaim our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**C:** **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL**

**A:** Let us pray.

Gracious God, Precious Savior, we know that your mercy is for everyone. Sometimes we act as if it's conditional, as if it's based upon our performance or who we think we are.

We often try to label people as more or less deserving of your mercy. This becomes a no-win situation.

It's not possible for anyone to stand before you and lay claim to special consideration.

Our hands are empty. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to gain access to your mercy.

Through Christ, you have clearly shown us that you love us just the way we are. When we genuinely believe this, we will change into people with a purpose. This news is too important to hold inside! It must be shared. Help us do that sharing.

During these days that are filled with anxiety, Lord, we know in our hearts you are always aware of us. You know where we are right now, and you have a plan for our future. We want to trust you and be confident that everything is designed to make us more and more like you as we walk through each day. But sometimes it seems as though we're totally on our own. It feels like we're facing a mountain we have to climb, with nothing to hold on to, and we see no way to get to the top.

Show us the path we're to take, Lord. We trust you will guide us. When there are boulders along the way, please teach us how to use them as steppingstones. When we run into slippery places, give us solid footing. When the path twists and turns and we're not sure which direction to go, we yearn for assurance that you are present to push us in the right direction.

It's easy to make our own decisions, only to realize we've gotten into something over which we have no control. Remind us to depend on you to show us every step we should take, especially during this time of high anxiety brought on by so much uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus and day-to-day living. Give us the grace to believe that you will lead us to the right destination point.

Help us during this time of anxiety, to pray not only for our own wants but for the needs of those on Zion's prayer list and those unable to cope with all life's challenges ... including financial burdens, emotional burdens, concerns about medical care, those in need of food, justice for all, and all those challenges that affect others in ways we can't comprehend.

And now, Heavenly Father, accept these prayers we offer to you in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who came for all humanity and taught us to pray together saying ...

**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 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.**



† **A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING** †  
*A prayer of thanks to God by his faithful people.*

P: Heavenly Father, sender of the apostles, inspirer of the prophets, we give you thanks for all whom you have sent to be our guides through the mazes of decisions that are before us in life. We rejoice in the diversity we find between Peter and Paul, and Elijah and Jesus. We celebrate the concerted service of Aquila and Pricilla, Barnabas, Mark, and others who, like the twelve, found ways of serving you in a variety of ways. We are grateful for individuals and couples and groups who have the courage to share their faith with us and help us to mature in our understanding of your will and support us in our attempt to do your will. With great joy we remember them and praise your name with them, an undivided company joined by trust, unity, mission, and determination. Through Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.



† **THE SENDING** †  
*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

**HYMN**

*Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

ELW 886

*(Verse 1)*

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing  
my great Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King,  
the triumphs of his grace!

*(Verse 2)*

My gracious Master and my God,  
assist me to proclaim,  
to spread through all the earth abroad  
the honors of your name.

*(Verse 3)*

The name of Jesus charms our fears  
and bids our sorrows cease,  
sings music in the sinner's ears,  
brings life and health and peace.

*(Verse 4)*

He speaks, and list'ning to his voice,  
new life the dead receive;  
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,  
the humble poor believe.

*(Verse 5)*

Look unto him, your Savior own,  
O fallen human race!  
Look and be saved through faith alone,  
be justified by grace!

*(Verse 6)*

To God all glory, praise, and love  
be now and ever giv'n  
by saints below and saints above,  
the church in earth and heav'n.

**BLESSING**

P: God calls us to step out in faith, unity, and mission, to follow where he leads even if what he calls us to do seems impossible. So, let's live our lives with courage, trusting in God's presence and power and eager to do God's will.

And may the blessing of almighty God ... Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among you and within you wherever you find yourselves each day. Amen.

**DISMISSAL**

P: United in Christ, go forth to love and serve.

**POSTLUDE**

*Fanfare on 'Lobe Den Herren'*

C. Penfield

## **PRAYER LIST**

### ***FOR HEALING***

Marvin Ruch  
Adele King  
Kate Donnan  
Barbara Williams  
Dave Wise  
Kevin Reinhart  
Joe Adams  
Judie Ingersoll  
Lucy Davis  
Bill Grove  
Kay Crawford  
Holly Hoover  
Betty Stoner  
Don Heartter  
Janet & Harry Musselman  
Bob Steinmetz (Brother of Diane Gerlach)  
Homer Dietz (Brother-in-law of Harry Musselman)  
Ron Sahd (Friend of Dave Wise)  
Wilson Pipkin (Father of Wilson Pipkin)  
Loma Slike (Mother of Sue Wise)  
Mike LaFatta (Son-in-law of Bill & Julia Grove)

### ***FOR COMFORT, PEACE, STRENGTH, & SAFETY***

For the family and friends grieving the death of Fred Hamor.  
Richard and Marilyn Heim  
Arlene Miller  
Deb McCartney  
Marlin Zimmerman  
Charlotte & George Potts  
Bette Geibel  
Jennifer Thompson  
Ted Symonds & Family  
Residents and Staff of the Phoenixville Care & Rehabilitation Center  
Arlene Wise (Sister-in-law of Dave Wise)  
Vaun Hile (Father of Lynda Sherwood)  
Jennifer Kready (Daughter of Dave & Donna Dumeyer)

***FOR PROTECTION FOR MILITARY & FIRST RESPONDERS***

Christopher Wright

Chris Andrew

Thom Whitesel

Ryan Stitzel

Doug Kautter

Justin Gorklaski

Corey Landis (Nephew of Jesse & Pat Landis)

David Adams (Son-in-law of John & Kathleen Hay, and husband of Liz)



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*Never Underestimate  
the Power of Prayer*