

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKY

20 August The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 422 401 395 839 74 219

INTROIT: Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us! May He make His face shine on us that Your Way may be known on the earth, and Your salvation among all nations!

Let the peoples praise You, O God! Let all the peoples praise You!

Let the nations be glad and shout for joy! For You will judge the peoples justly and will lead the nations on the earth.

Let the peoples praise You, O God! Let all the peoples praise You!

The earth has produced its yield. God, our God, will bless us.

God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear Him.

COLLECT: Almighty and everlasting Father, You give Your children many blessings even though we are undeserving. In every trial and temptation grant us steadfast confidence in Your loving-kindness and mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

READINGS: Isaiah 56:1, 6–8 “My house . . . a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Romans 11:1–2a, 13–15, 28–32 “God has consigned all . . . that He may have mercy on all.”

Matthew 15:21–28 Jesus heals.

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

¹ This is what the LORD has said: “Maintain justice and do what is right! For My salvation is coming close, and My righteousness will soon be revealed...”

⁶ “As for the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD to minister to Him, to love the name of the LORD and to be His servants, and, as for everyone who keeps the Sabbath without profaning it, and, as for those who hold firmly to My

Covenant, ⁷ these I shall 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 will be called ‘a house of prayer’ for all the peoples.**”

⁸ The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed people of Israel, declares, “I shall gather still others to them besides those who have already been gathered to them.”

Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32

¹ Therefore, I ask, **“God has not rejected His people, has He?”** Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

² **God has not rejected His people**, whom He foreknew...

¹³ I am speaking to you Gentiles. Since I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I continue to glorify my ministry, ¹⁴ in the hope that I may somehow **arouse** my own people **to envy** and save some of them. ¹⁵ For, if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

²⁸ From the viewpoint of the Good News, they are enemies on your account, but, from the viewpoint of election, they are dearly loved because of their fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God cannot be revoked. ³⁰ For, as you were once disobedient to God, yet you have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ so also these people have become disobedient now, while you enjoy mercy, that they also may now receive mercy. ³² For God has locked all people into disobedience that He may be merciful to all people.

Matthew 15:21-28

²¹ Then Jesus went out from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman of that territory came out and began to shout: “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.”

²³ However, He did not answer her a word. Then His disciples came to Him and urged Him, “Send her away! For she keeps shouting after us.”

²⁴ He answered, “I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the family of Israel.”

²⁵ Then she came, bowed down before Him and said, “Lord, help me!”

²⁶ He answered, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the pet dogs.”

²⁷ She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the pet dogs eat some of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.”

²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, your faith is great! Let it be done for you as you wish!”

From that hour her daughter was made well.

FAITH LIKE THE CANAANITE WOMAN
Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost 2023
Matthew 15:21-28

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

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel for today, Matthew 15:21-28:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The writer of Hebrews says, “*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (11:1). What does the author mean with the word “faith”? It is not some hunch-following, some blind leaping into the dark. Neither is it a hoping for the best, blithely disregarding facts and assuming all will be well. No, “*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.*” “*Assurance*” means having solid confidence. Faith brings the future into the present because it makes things hoped for as real as if we already had them. Christ’s Second Coming in glory and our full enjoyment of eternal salvation are hoped for and real to us. The author continues, that faith is “*the conviction of things not seen.*” “*Assurance*” and “*conviction*” are synonyms, describing faith’s solid confidence. Though we have not seen the creation or the crucifixion, though we were not present to witness the flood waters rising above the mountain peaks or the Saviour rising triumphantly from the Easter tomb, though we have not heard His actual voice pardoning our sins and promising his return, *yet we believe.*

Is this the faith that you have? Do you have a sure and confident faith that perseveres and trusts in a merciful Lord? That is the question that our text today will help us to answer.

The story begins with Jesus going up to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon were cities to the north outside the boundaries of Israel, along the coast. The people who lived there were Gentiles or pagans. They did not follow the religion of Israel.

“**A Canaanite woman of that territory came out**” to Jesus. “Canaanite” is an Old Testament word for the people living in the land of Canaan back when

the Israelites moved in. The Canaanites were outside the covenant the Lord had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet, they were in close enough contact, close enough proximity, to have some knowledge of the religion of Israel.

And apparently, this woman did. She comes to Jesus, crying out, **“Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!”** Notice the title she uses, **“Son of David.”** That’s a *messianic title*. The Messiah whom God had promised would be the Son of David - a physical descendant of the great King David and the greatest of all, even greater than David himself. The Lord had promised David that one of his sons would reign on his throne forever. And this Son of David, this Messiah, this Christ, would usher in a glorious reign of blessing for Israel and - and this was the point often forgotten by Israel - a glorious reign of blessing for all the other nations, too. When Messiah comes, His blessing would extend to the Gentiles and Israel. The nations would come running to Israel to receive the Lord’s blessing - much as this Canaanite woman is doing now in coming to Jesus.

This woman *must have known the prophecies about the coming Messiah, the Son of David.* She knew something of those promises, and it gave her faith. She was waiting and looking for the coming of the Christ and recognised in Jesus the One who fulfilled those prophecies. She saw in Him the promised Son of David. *Faith looks to Jesus as the fulfiller of God’s promises.* The Canaanite woman must have heard what Jesus was doing, His healings, His miracles, and His acts of mercy. That emboldened her now to come forward with her request, **“Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.”**

“Have mercy on me, Lord.” Several times in the Gospels we hear people crying out to Jesus with those words. Blind men asking for their sight. A father seeking help for his demonised son, and this woman, a mother seeking similar help for her daughter, who was suffering terribly. So she cries out, **“Have mercy on me, Lord.”** That’s the cry of the church in all ages. The church calls on her Lord and asks for His mercy. We come before God with all these needs, suffering, and misery in our lives and the world. We need God’s help and His mercy.

And that’s what God gives us - His mercy. God’s power is made known chiefly in showing mercy. That’s why Christ came. All the misery we pile up in this world - sin, sickness, death, a guilty conscience - ultimately, the answer to all of it is in the mercy that took Christ to the cross. By His all-availing death, you and I shall be delivered, finally, from all the misery that there is. The mercy of God

is His answer to our misery. He visits us in our distress and relieves us from the ravages and effects of sin in the world. This world is in a mess. Human beings are suffering in misery. Thank God that He has mercy on us! He wants us to call upon Him in our day of trouble as the Canaanite woman did. **“Have mercy on me, Lord!”**

Now notice Jesus’ response - or should we say, His lack of response! **“However, He did not answer her a word.”** That’s surprising. It’s not what we would expect. What’s going on here? Is Jesus being cold-hearted? How do we explain His silence? Come to think of it, how do we explain the silence of God in our lives? Sometimes when we pray, we don’t get the answer we want. Does God not hear our prayers? We’re met with silence. This is a mystery to us. But God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. The silence of God is not His cold-heartedness but rather *our inability to see what God is doing*. He may have a better plan than the one we have in mind. So at first, the Canaanite woman is met with silence. **“He did not answer her a word.”** The timing is not right yet. Jesus is waiting a bit before He answers. He wants this woman to exercise her faith, to stretch it out.

And maybe He has something He wants to teach His disciples, too. Perhaps there is a little cold-heartedness in the disciples. They don’t understand what Jesus is wanting to do, so they say, **“Send her away! For she keeps shouting after us.”** They’re saying, *“Get lost! A lousy Gentile like you doesn’t deserve any help.”* At first, it seems that Jesus is going along with this. He tells her, **“I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the family of Israel.”** And that’s true. In His earthly ministry, Jesus the Messiah was sent principally to the house of Israel, that is, to the Jews. The lost sheep of Israel needed to be gathered, for the LORD had made a covenant with Israel, and Jesus was sent to fulfil it. His ministry, for the most part, was among the Jews. Long ago, the LORD had promised to bless the descendants of Abraham, and now Jesus was keeping that promise - to the Jews first.

But the promise of blessing to Israel when the Messiah would come, did not exclude those Gentiles who came into contact with Israel. They can “rub up” against the blessing, so to speak. That’s what this Gentile woman is doing. Jesus had come for the lost sheep of Israel, and it was not until after His resurrection that the mission would be expanded in a major way to the Gentiles. But even now, while He’s busy ministering to the Jews, Jesus will not withhold His blessing from this Gentile woman, although, for a moment, it looks like He will.

He says, **“I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the family of Israel.”** Jesus is just making clear that He’s not going to change the focus of His ministry and shift His turf up to Tyre and Sidon and the Gentile regions.

Despite this seeming rebuff, the Canaanite woman persists. She perseveres. She bows down before Jesus and says, **“Lord, help me!”** But again, another obstacle is placed in her way. Jesus replies, **“It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the pet dogs.”** What Jesus meant by these words was something like, *“It’s not right to take the blessings promised to the children of Israel and give them to the Gentiles,”* that is, “the dogs.” At first glance, this seems like a terrible insult, as one surely does not go around calling other people “dogs!” But often, the Jews would refer to Gentiles as “dogs,” as a term of disrespect, a derogatory insult. However, there’s something interesting in the way Jesus says it. In the Greek language, there are two words for “dog.” The most common is the word Jews would use to insult Gentiles, but that’s not what Jesus uses. Instead, He uses a word that can be translated as *“little pet dogs”* or *“doggies.”* This is an affectionate term used for dogs who got to live in the house and were taken care of. That’s the word that Jesus uses, a kind and inviting word - not some kind of insult. And the woman picks up on it. **She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the pet dogs eat some of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.”** She’s got it! Faith hears what the Lord is saying and latches onto it. Jesus was not putting her off. Instead, He was giving her a word she could latch on to and cling to.

The woman came, not claiming anything as her right *but simply throwing herself on the Lord’s mercy*. She was willing to be a dog that eats the scraps off the table. She was ready to be a little dog if it meant being around the Lord’s table, for that’s where the blessings are. Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst, and those who come as beggars or dogs to the Lord of all mercy.¹

The Canaanite woman did not give up when obstacles were placed in her way. She persevered. Luther says she battles Christ: *“She catches the Lord Christ in His own words. Yes, still more, with the rights of dogs she gains the rights of a child. Now where will He go, the dear Jesus? He has caught Himself and must help her. But know this well: He loves to be caught in this way. If only we had the skill of this woman to catch God in His own judgment and say, ‘Yes, Lord, it is true. I am a sinner and not worthy of your grace. But you have promised forgiveness and did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.’ Behold, Christ must then, through His own judgment, have mercy on us.”*

¹ Matthew 5:3ff

The Canaanite woman is not deterred. Think of the obstacles her God-given faith fought through: She was not deterred by Jesus' initial silence when He did not answer her. She was not deterred by the disciples' comment, "**Send her away!**" She was not deterred by Jesus' comment about being sent only to the lost sheep of Israel or by His remark about the dogs eating the children's bread. This woman simply does not give up. She perseveres. Her faith - again, her God-given faith, produced by the Spirit working through the Word - *her faith overcomes all these obstacles*.

Dear friends, God wants you to have this. He wants you to have the same persevering faith in a merciful Lord. God wants you to come to Jesus, time and time again, in spite of any obstacles you may face. It's so easy to give up. People do it all the time. When there is suffering in their life, they give up and think that God doesn't care. People give up and stop coming to Jesus when something goes wrong. When something at church doesn't go the way they like, people give up and stop coming to church. But God does not want you to give up. He wants you to persevere in faith, as the Canaanite woman did, and to seek and find His mercy. The Canaanite woman did not give up, and Jesus commended her faith: "**O woman, your faith is great! Let it be done for you as you wish!**" He grants her request. "**From that hour her daughter was made well.**"

Jesus here demonstrates His authority over the demons of hell. He has authority over sin and death and the devil. Jesus has won the victory for us over those things. But He did it in a most mysterious way. Moved by His mercy, the Son of God came down from heaven, came into our mess, and suffered our misery with us. He entered into it, fully. Jesus suffered the ravages of sin when He was nailed to the cross. He suffered the silence of God when He cried out, "*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (Matt. 27:46). But God then vindicated His Son by raising Him from the dead. God has shown His mercy in the most significant way. His mercy in Christ forgives our sins, delivers us from the devil's power, and gives us the hope of everlasting life. "*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!*" (1 Chron. 16:34).

Dear friends, this is the merciful Lord we trust, and today God is strengthening you in your faith. He is building in you a faith that perseveres. Persevering faith in a merciful Lord. Faith like that of the Canaanite woman, who was willing to come like a little dog to eat at the Lord's table. Great was her faith because great was her Lord, the one who had called forth that faith. He is the Lord who has mercy on us, even when it looks like He doesn't. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord God, we rejoice that we are Your children because of Your constant love and mercy. We are what we are purely by Your grace. You have made us Your own, and fulfilled all Your rich promises to us. You give power and strength to Your people. Therefore hear our prayers as we come to You, not in our own name or goodness, but in the name and by the merits of Jesus Christ.

We praise You for the glorious Gospel of Your grace. We rejoice to know that You have kept Your word by sending Your Son Jesus Christ when the right time came, to give His flesh, and to rise again on the third day so that through Him we may never taste death.

We thank You for the apostles' sure witness to Christ's resurrection in Your holy Word, on which our faith can stand firm. Fill us with love and faith in our risen Lord, so that we may live in a joy that words cannot fully express, and that we may confidently wait for eternal fellowship with You in the life to come.

Give us Your Spirit's power to remain strong in our faith, in spite of all the doubt and ridicule of our age. Keep us each day in repentance for sin, in humble reliance on Your mercy, and in the peace of Your forgiveness. Give us such love for You that we may devote our whole lives to serving You in cheerful obedience.

Pour Your Holy Spirit's power on the Church, that it may take Your Gospel to others, and proclaim Jesus Christ to them as their only hope of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Defend Your Church from its enemies and from all false teaching, that it may know no other Gospel than the one You gave it once and for all.

We pray for our country. Give us leaders in all walks of life who respect Your commandments, promote what is good, and oppose what is evil, so that our citizens may live in harmony, peace, and uprightness, and show concern for the good of all.

We pray for our homes. Give all parents a burning desire to teach their children to know, love, and respect You in Jesus Christ. Enable all families to live together in peace, love, and true wisdom.

Hear the prayers of the suffering, the bereaved, the needy, the homeless, the wounded, the worried, and the despairing. Lead them in mercy out of all that distresses them. Deliver us from every evil of body and soul, and at our last hour mercifully take us from the troubles of this life to Yourself in heaven.

Give us these things, O Father, and whatever else is necessary for us, in the name of Jesus, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: The Christian Faith

The Christian faith can be expressed in few words or many words. The Bible, the book that God wrote, is a hefty volume. But it contains many short summaries of the Christian faith. Other good writings about the faith come in various sizes, from pamphlets to multi-volume works.

The summaries are short and sweet. We should want to learn all that God has told us in the Bible. That is a job for more than one lifetime. But we should not lose sight of the simple, straightforward, summary statements.

Over the years I have considered many outlines for presenting the Christian faith. Such an outline should include all the topics of the Bible. But it should be as straight and narrow as an arrow, always getting directly to the point. I keep coming back to a seven-point outline for the main topics of theology: God, World, Man, Christ, Word, Church, End.

If you can tell people what the Bible says on those seven topics, you can present the whole Christian faith, all Christian teaching. We cannot understand, define, or explain God perfectly. Much mystery remains, but the Bible speaks clearly enough for us to know about the true God and to trust Him for salvation. That is all we need to know.

Orthodox theologians have used many different outlines. That does not matter. What matters is the content.

In the Bible, God used a different outline than any of the above. In God's book, the basic arrangement is historical. The Bible records the facts of the faith in basically chronological order. Then it gives further explanations in other books. One should read first the historical books, then the prophetic books; first the Gospels, then the Epistles.

But what is missing from the outline suggested here? God, World, Man, Christ, Word, Church, End. That covers it all.

God: There is one and only one divine Being. But three Persons are each true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is present everywhere, knows everything, and can do anything. God is perfect. God is holy. God is just. God is loving.

World: God made the world out of nothing through His Word. That happened in six days about six thousand years ago. The world is not part of God and God is not part of the world. God made the world very good. Any problems in it are not His fault. God did not forget about the world after creating it. He governs and preserves it and blesses us in it every day.

Man: Man was made by God in the image of God. Man is body and soul/spirit. Man was created to love God totally and to love his neighbour as himself. But Adam and Eve, the parents of the whole human race, fell into sin, disobeying God. Now we

are born sinful and are powerless to save ourselves. Man was created good and is still essentially good. But we are in the corrupt condition of sinfulness and commit many specific sins against God's Law (the Ten Commandments). We have deserved damnation.

Christ: God the Son became a true Man, Jesus Christ. True God and true Man, He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and died on the cross for all human sin, in place of every sinner. He rose from the dead, proving that God has accepted His sacrifice and forgiven our sins. He reigns forever, and we are His forever.

Word: The Bible is the Word of God, written by God through men, and is completely true. The main teachings of the Bible are Law and Gospel. The Law proclaims God's wrath because of sin and condemns our sins. The Gospel proclaims God's grace because of Jesus and forgives our sins. The Gospel is proclaimed not only in preaching and teaching but also very significantly in Absolution, Baptism, and Communion. Through the Law, the Holy Spirit brings people to acknowledge their sinfulness and to know their need for forgiveness. Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit brings people to trust that their sins have been forgiven for Jesus' sake. The Gospel brings all spiritual blessings: the new birth to the new life of faith; growth in faith, hope, joy, peace, etc.; and the start and growth of love for God and the neighbour (Gospel motivation, sanctification).

Church: All believers in Christ and only believers in Christ are members of Christ's body, the church. Because we cannot look into one another's hearts, the church is invisible. Christ wants His people to be gathered locally around Word and Sacrament (Third Commandment). Through the local flock, God calls men to preach and teach, to administer the Sacraments with careful stewardship, and to exercise spiritual supervision over the flock.

End: When a human being dies, his soul/spirit goes to heaven or hell. Christ will visibly return to earth at the end of the world. He will raise all the dead and glorify all believers. Unbelievers will go to hell, body and soul, to suffer forever. Believers will go to heaven, body and soul, to praise God and to enjoy His presence forever.

That sums it up pretty well. Every Christian will see that many more specific statements are needed, especially about the Sacraments. Of course, every point would have to be proven by reference to Scripture alone. But that could all be done, and well done, with this outline.

This message is to be preached around the world to the end of the world. This message is to be preached for the salvation of the precious souls for whom Christ died. He died for all. We should want to proclaim this Word to all. That is what it is all about.

Children's Message:

What is this a picture of? It's a globe. Perhaps you have a globe in your school classroom, or even in your own home. What does a globe show us? Yes, a globe shows us all the places, all the lands, of the world.

Now, where was Jesus born? Jesus was born in a land known as Israel. You can't see Israel in our picture of a globe, but that country is roughly at the top of the globe, just under the word "Children's", in the title "Children's Message." Anyhow, why was Jesus born?

Why was He here on earth? Yes, Jesus came to save us from our sins - all the bad things we say and do. He died on a cross to pay for our sins, and then He came back to life again. As those who believe in Him - who know that Jesus is our Saviour - we have forgiveness from God for all the times we were bad. *God does not hold one sin against us.*

So, is Jesus the Saviour of just the people of Israel? Is He the Saviour of people from only one country in the world? Of course not! The good news is that Jesus is the Saviour of people living all over the world! He is the Saviour of people who live in our country, Australia.

The Bible says - and you probably know this verse - "*God so loved the world*" - God loved all people from every land - "*that He gave His only Son*" - God sent Jesus into the world - "*that whoever believes in Him*" - this means anybody from any land - will be saved from sin and live forever with Jesus. This means that you can always be happy that Jesus is your SavioUr, that he loves you, and that after your time here on earth you will live with him in heaven.

This also means that you can pray to Jesus whenever you want. He will always hear your prayer and answer you in the best way. One of your prayers can be that God will bring people to faith in Jesus, people who do not yet know Him. Such people are in our country and in every country all around the world.

Because, remember, Jesus died on the cross to save people from all places, from every land all around the world.

Thank You Father for sending Your Son Jesus into the world to be its Saviour. Help me to proclaim this news to everyone I meet in my life! Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

27 August 13 Pentecost	3 September 14 Pentecost	10 September 15 Pentecost
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC <u>9.00am</u> GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 27 August		
READINGS: Isaiah 51:1-6; Romans 11:33-12:8; Matthew 16:13-20		
HYMNS: 386 188 191 (54 290) 248		
Sunday, 3 September		
READINGS: Jeremiah 15:15-21; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28		
HYMNS: 503 112 171 (177 840) 458		

August Bible Studies:

Oakey/Aubigny, Friday, 25th, 7.30pm at Oakey.