

Discussion & Reflection Questions
Pentecost 12A - 20th of August 2023
Thankful for the Benefit of Others

Read: Romans 11:16-18

If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not vaunt yourselves over the branches. If you do vaunt yourselves, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you.

Read: Matthew 15.21-28

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.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

1. Paul is speaking of "first fruits" what do you know or understand of the offering of first fruits in the Old Testament?
2. "First Fruits" was also how the people of Israel saw their relationship with God - they were the first fruit however Paul says that the whole batch is holy. What is the relationship of status & privilege in the church? What should it be?
3. There are 2 general scholarly positions on the encounter with the Canaanite woman: either Jesus is testing her or she changes Jesus mind. Do you find either of those positions more or less convincing?
4. In relation to the first reading, what was the status & privilege of the Canaanite woman?
5. She brings her "messy" situation to Jesus & asks for Jesus to bless & intervene. How might we consider bringing the messiness of our lives as an offering to God & what might God do in response to that offering?
6. How can we be thankful when things aren't the way we would want them to be?

Prayer

God of freedom, you have broken the tyranny of sin and sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that all people may know the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.