

# Pentecost #11

8/17/08

Matthew 15:10-28

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## Celebrate (Introduction)

In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

**Opening Hymn:** ["We Praise You, O God"](#)

## Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us

and make his face to shine upon us,*Selah*

<sup>2</sup>that your way may be known upon earth,  
your saving power among all nations.

<sup>3</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God;

let all the peoples praise you.

<sup>4</sup>Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,

for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth.*Selah*

<sup>5</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God;

let all the peoples praise you.

<sup>6</sup>The earth has yielded its increase;

God, our God, has blessed us.

<sup>7</sup>May God continue to bless us;

let all the ends of the earth revere him

**Hymn of Praise:** ["You Servants of God"](#)

## Prayer of the Day

God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen."

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Isaiah 56:1, 6-8](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [Romans 11:1-2,29-32](#)

**The Gospel:** [Matthew 15:10-28](#)

**Hymn of the Day:** [“Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life”](#)

**The Message** ([Video](#))

Some of us may remember the 60's and early 70's when everything within society was questioned, challenged, and even threatened. What had been blindly accepted by previous generations as the American way or the American culture was seen as coming apart at the seams. The Vietnam War was not only questioned but actively and even violently protested. Racial prejudice and injustice which had been ingrained into our society lead its victims to take to the streets crying out “enough is enough, we demand justice and equality”. The political practices of backroom politics was demonstratively opposed and exposed for what it was. Inequality between genders became a major issue with the women's rights movement raising its voice. The Church was not exempt for what was seen as hypocrisy and shallow traditionalism was rejected as being irrelevant and passé`.

This was the era of the radicals who caused a political and social revolution to takes place. Even to this day their actions are strongly rejected by a large portion of society. Many still long for the “good ole days” filled with apple pie, ice cream sodas, and some kind of perceived American traditional life. Ignored is the fact that this clouded view of the past was filled with injustice, discrimination, and corruption. All of the ills of the past were and still are overlooked, tolerated and accepted as if they never existed. Everything is fine just so long as the harmful results affected someone else.

In reality, although there were many changes which occurred doing this social, cultural, political and religious revolution, many of the ills went underground. The unresolved or partially answered issues of the 60's have resurfaced again along with many additional societal ills and even life threatening realities.

It is a fact that all societies seem to stray away from their original roots and ethical standards through man's nature to pursue greed, corruption, and power. Therefore protestors and even what are called radical movements are an essential ingredient to expose and correct the ills of a society or even in a religion. Revolutions become essential to the progress of mankind so long as they bring into reality the root or fundamental elements of security, equality, and justice for all and not just for the privileged few.

That is why history reveres such people as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther king to name a few. In their time they were considered to be radicals and revolutionaries or even just plain trouble makers. Christianity is no exception for it has had what could be considered to be its radicals; Zwingli, Huss, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Pope John and Francis, and Bonhoeffer to name a few. In one way or

another all could have been called radicals and revolutionaries for they called for drastic change. Some were more extreme than others and some were more successful than others.

In this light, Jesus himself could very well have been called a radical or revolutionary of His time. Our Gospel lesson this morning vividly indicates this. He clearly and openly attacked one of the central observances of the Jewish tradition and religion, the dietary laws and surrounding rituals as found in the book of Leviticus. These were the laws interpreted and enforced by the Pharisees and clearly seen as essential to observe in order to be righteous in God's eyes.

In the midst of a crowd, among whom were some Pharisees, Jesus stated "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." This is to say, it is not what is eaten or how it is eaten which makes a person worthy or unworthy in the sight of God, but what comes out of his mouth. Evil is spewed as a result of a sinful mind and good comes from a loving heart. The life expression of man is not the result of rituals or dietary laws but it is the motivation which comes from the core of one's life.

This was a slap in the face of all who believed in and enforced the dietary laws and rituals which were held to be so central to one's religious life and tradition. It undermined centuries of Jewish practices and beliefs. This statement questioned the very scriptures, the word of God. This was heresy to say the least. What added fuel to the fire was that Jesus had now undermined the very authority of the Hebrew hierarchy, especially the Pharisees, Scribes, and High Priests.

If that were not enough to place him on the disposable list of heretics and radicals, His journey into Gentile territory, Tyre and Sidon, and His encounter with the Canaanite woman most certainly would have been damaging in itself. A Jew was not to have any contact or even conversation with a Gentile. To do so would not only compromise one's patriotism but to place the violator in the category of unclean.

Jesus' journeyed into this foreign land was to perhaps escape the crowds and the Jewish authorities. But, even in this foreign land his reputation had spread for the Canaanite woman knew of him and his deeds. 'Have mercy on me Lord, Son of David, my daughter is tormented by a demon.' She, a Canaanite, called him "Lord, Son of David". What is this a non-Jew calling a Jew Lord? She gave recognition that Jesus had not only come to bring the Good News to the Jews but to all people. Therefore she hounded him to heal her daughter. Refusing the wishes of His disciples to get rid of her, Jesus did the unthinkable; He began a lively conversation with her which turned out to be an almost friendly bantering. He ended by showing His compassion "Woman great is your faith! Let it be done for as you wish." He healed this non Jew's daughter.

It is quite evident that Jesus did not come to preserve the status quo. He did not come to guard and preserve the past traditions and laws. He did not come to conserve the religious institutions and its practices. He did come to establish a new kingdom based upon a

relationship of love and forgiveness between God and all of mankind. He came to radicalize what was the established theological and religious thinking and practices. He came to peel away all of the pietistic rituals which had become the religion in and of themselves. Rituals and laws were not what Jesus came to proclaim and he did not hide his displeasure in the fact that they had corrupted man's relationship with God. He tore the traditional theocratic society into pieces. He started a revolution based upon love and equality which has persisted throughout history.

Jesus' message of love is by its very nature a radical force within a society of inequality, greed, corruption, and injustice. This radical force always must be lived out of the motivation of love and not become an element of destruction out of anger, hatred, and frustration. But, we must stand firm in our endeavors to change that which denies the well-being of our brothers and sister whoever they may be. We must be that beacon of light constantly shining in the darkness of man's instincts to go astray. It is necessary that the Church be radical in so far as to constantly promote change within people to the basics of what the relationship with God is all about. This means that it takes faith in believing that Jesus has given us the example of this relationship. It takes faith to believe the promise of God's eternal kingdom. It takes faith to believe that what is important in life is the spiritual guidance of the heart. It takes faith to believe in the radical but basic message of Jesus.

**Anthem:** Moorehouse College Glee Club ["We Shall Overcome"](#)

### **Offering**

We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

### **The Prayer**

Father of us all, our lives are being challenged every day by those who wish to ignore the societal ills of the past and present. Give us the strength and the wisdom to be your emissaries of love, justice, equality and peace. Give us the will and courage to stand for what is just and right for all people. Let us never waver in our hope for a future which brings a life reflective of the love you have shown us. Continue to give strength and health to all care givers during this pandemic. Comfort those who have lost loved ones as a result of the corona virus. Bring healing to all who are physically and economically struggling during this time of suffering.

We continue to pray for those who have been overtaken by the corona virus and those who are caring for them in their desperate time. Help us be sensitive to all those who are suffering at this time and work towards alleviating their pain.

We pray for all whole need your comforting an healing presence especially Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Danny Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack

Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

#### **Closing Hymn: ["God of Grace and God of Glory"](#)**

\*Offering to be sent to:

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