

**Lessons for The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost      August 20, 2023**

*Psalm 67 ~ A prayer for God's favor on all the people of the earth, that they might praise him.*

*Isaiah 56:1, 6-8 ~ God gathers exiles of Israel and people from all nations into His covenant of love.*

*Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32 ~ God's gift of grace to Jew and Gentile alike is given freely.*

*Matthew 15:21-28 ~ A Canaanite woman in great need has even greater faith that Jesus will help her.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** A Family from All Nations

A family reflects the oneness God gives to the people He gathers from all nations. Whether they are exiles of Israel or sojourners from other nations, God's love in Christ will gather them into His covenant. St. Paul struggled with the powerful wall between Jew and Gentile which threatened to divide God's people between the call of the covenant and the grace that gathers people from every nation. Jesus carried the message of the Kingdom to the children of Israel, but the family of God spilled beyond borders as his promise of wellness created faith even among foreigners.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Good and gracious Father, you have made me your child and embraced me with your grace in Jesus Christ. Help me cross borders of jealousy, anger, and fear to be at home with all those your love has claimed. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** Every helping word or deed lights up a needy person's life.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** All around us, Father, needy neighbors lift their face.  
Some are starving bodily because they have no food;  
Others, lost and crushed in spirit, hunger for Your grace.  
Bless these gifts to meet their needs and share Your gospel news. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** In our pride and self-sufficiency, we turn our backs on God's blessings because they seem so insignificant or because accepting them makes us dependent on God's kindness, but God's gracious love in Jesus embraces us, especially in our dependence, and brings us into the family of his love. Those who know they must depend on God are filled with His grace.

**Questions to Consider:** What walls have you built and maintained in your life?

- What kinds of walls threaten the unity of the family of God?
- How does the Gospel unite those called by the promise with those who have received mercy?
- What wall referenced in Matthew 15 does Jesus' message of Kingdom grace breach?
- Why is faith satisfied with crumbs of God's grace?

**Bonus on Next Page:** God's gift bridges chasms between people. (Christmas in August!)

## **Mended Hearts for Christmas**

The Gift, the Giver, and Recipient,  
all wrapped in swaddling with a bow of hay,  
was present to a broken world that went  
along its proud and stubborn, deadly way.

The Gift, the Giver, and Recipient,  
with loving care, selected carefully,  
handcrafted it Himself and had it sent,  
wrapped just in loincloth, hanging on a tree.

The Gift, the Giver, and Recipient,  
waits patiently for burdens from your heart,  
unwraps the aches and pains, the sins that bent  
your love with pride and broke two friends apart.

Now use the gift the Christ Child bought for you;  
with healing words mend broken hearts anew.

*– Gilbert A. Franke  
November 26, 2001*