**One for All, all for One (8-20-17)**

Isaiah 56: 1, 6-8 Romans 11: 1- 2(a), 29-32 Matthew 15: 21-28

**Summary:** Looking on sinners, God does not say, “Shame on you.” Instead, God hears Jesus say, “Let me take that.”

All the scriptures today bring up tough, uncomfortable feelings. Isaiah seems safe enough until you remember that this is what Jesus quoted from in the only Gospel memory which shows him in a violent rage, chasing the buyers and sellers from the Temple with a whip made of braided rope. “God says, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ Jesus quotes, “but you have made it into a den of thieves.”

It is important to notice two things. First, the people driven away were there for their own profit and not for prayer. Secondly, this is the temple that had a giant curtain that kept all eyes off a place where everyone was certain God was: seated on the Ark of the Covenant. That curtain was torn apart by an earthquake the moment Jesus died. There is a profound contrast here: evil is expelled, yet holiness is exposed, implying that everyone may have access to God.

Paul comes up with an even more painful puzzle. He is a Jew; yet, he is a Christian in an age of persecution. Anger, resentment, fear, hatred, and mutual shaming sprang up and was rampant between Jew and Christian right after the resurrection and continues to this day. Paul acidly explains the obvious: God does not change His mind nor reject His own people. Paul is a Jew, like Jesus! Paul’s point appears to be that both Jews and Gentiles have been disobedient, both groups are needing mercy which only God can provide.

As if this isn’t enough tough love, the Gospel shows Jesus being nagged by one of those heretic Samaritan women who wants Him to heal her demon possessed daughter. I have to say, I love her tough sense of humor when Jesus says: “It isn’t right to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”

Her reply is remarkable: “True, but even the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from their master’s table!” Listen carefully: she said, “. . . from their master’s table.” So, “Yes,” she admits, “I am a dog, but you are my master!”

That faith transforms her into a daughter of Abraham, an heir of the open invitation of God, and – more to the point – a sister of Jesus. She gets what she asks for and, I am sure, infinitely more.

Here is what I get from all this. We all fall short of God’s glory, a glory God designed for us. God does not say, “Shame, shame on you!” God takes the shame, offers it to Jesus, and He pays the price. We have a lot of people who name themselves Christians who are busy saying, “Shame, shame” and playing a blame game leading many to addiction, terrorism, and death as they insist holy people must buy what they are selling in God’s Name. They take the Rock of Ages, cleft for me, into a den of thieves. A real Christian should not say, “Come, be like me.” Instead, we need to say, “Can we help each other to be like Jesus?

Gandhi, a Hindu, once said, “I like your Christ, but I do not like your Christians; they are so unlike your Christ.” It wasn’t scraps that fell from Heaven for dogs to fight over; it was Jesus who came from heaven to walk among us. When we were dogs, we called Him, “Master.” Now, we call Him: “Brother.”

So, let us leave this house of prayer in prayer, and let us leave *as* prayer. Once, we were possessed by demons; now, the love we looked for has found us! Jesus is one for us all. In Him, we all may be one for God. Amen.