

**St Peter's Anglican Church, Bundoora**  
**Proper 14 – 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Sunday 20/08/2023**

**Readings: Genesis 45 1-15 / P's 133 / Romans 11 13-32 / Matthew 15 21-28**

(Readings are from New International Version)

**Sermon Theme: *One in the Spirit***

By Rev'd Stephen Monsieigneur

**Genesis 45 1-15**

*Joseph Makes Himself Known*

**45** Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

<sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. <sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. <sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. <sup>10</sup> You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. <sup>11</sup> I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

<sup>12</sup> "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. <sup>13</sup> Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

<sup>14</sup> Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. <sup>15</sup> And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

**Psalms 133**

*A song of ascents. Of David.*

<sup>1</sup> How good and pleasant it is  
 when God's people live together in unity!

<sup>2</sup> It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
 running down on the beard,  
 running down on Aaron's beard,  
 down on the collar of his robe.

<sup>3</sup> It is as if the dew of Hermon  
 were falling on Mount Zion.  
 For there the LORD bestows his blessing,  
 even life forevermore.

### **Romans 11 13-32**

<sup>13</sup> I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry <sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup> If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

<sup>17</sup> If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup> do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” <sup>20</sup> Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

<sup>22</sup> Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

### *All Israel Will Be Saved*

<sup>25</sup> I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, <sup>26</sup> and in this way<sup>[e]</sup> all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion;  
 he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

<sup>27</sup> And this is<sup>[f]</sup> my covenant with them  
 when I take away their sins.”<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>28</sup> As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, <sup>29</sup> for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup> Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now<sup>[h]</sup> receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. <sup>32</sup> For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

### **Matthew 15 21-28**

#### *The Faith of a Canaanite Woman*

<sup>21</sup> Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

<sup>24</sup> He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

<sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

<sup>26</sup> He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

<sup>27</sup> “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

### **SERMON**

How good and pleasant it is  
when God’s people live together in unity!

Some people would argue I am sure, that Joseph had every right to punish his brothers. It is clear from the previous versus to what we have heard in our first reading today, that Joseph had spent some time pondering such thoughts. But he was incapable of hiding his joy at the possibility of reunification with his family especially his father. Life had been good to Joseph but there was more to his prayers.

In this gospel passage Jesus demonstrates a great example of what true openness looks like. We need to remember that Jesus experienced and understood life as a Jewish man. Yet though he viewed his ministry through the lens of his Jewishness, he was not blind to the needs of the Canaanite woman who came seeking his support and intervention. We are all blessed with gifts and called to share our blessings with others. It is in doing this that we are able to function as the body of Christ. But how often do we hold these blessings for our own purpose maybe even taking steps to avoid seeing or hearing others who seek our help?

One of the challenges in ministry is discerning just what ministry we are called to. I was advised once that the quickest way to learn what God’s plan for you is to tell God yours with great confidence your plan.

In today's Gospel we see a parent so in love with their child that she will trust a stranger, a non-Canaanite with the task of healing her daughter. We do not precisely know the history of this Canaanite woman or how she came to see Jesus with hope, but we learn that her faith in Jesus being able to heal her daughter is enough for her to challenge his dismissal of her initial request.

Jesus' initial response "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." (v24) is significant and confronting. Many would argue that the reply suggests that Jesus is discriminating against this woman because she is not Jewish. Maybe he was or maybe in his reference to the house of Israel, Jesus was referring to all people who recognise him and his connection with God. After all few, if any of us at St Peter's can likely trace our heritage to Israel.

Who are the Canaanites in your life?

The people you judge poorly against your self-perceived merits.

The woman not willing to settle with such dismissal asks Jesus again but this time Jesus responds with what can only be described as an insult to the Canaanite woman and perceivably to all non-Jews when in verse 26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." The children Jesus refers to are the house of Israel, all others are the dogs.

Are you comfortable with Jesus' current treatment of this obviously desperate mother? If not why not? After all Jesus is fully human.

Often Jesus is aware of our needs before we are, and I suggest that was the case here. But, Jesus is not really about fixing the difficult parts of our lives, actually he is about confirming faith in God's authority. Would you persist as this Canaanite woman did? But note her persistence was not driven by personal want but faith in Jesus.

How often do we ask for something – maybe even something specific – in prayer only to feel let down when it appears our prayer is not answered how we expect? When this happens, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that God is not hearing our prayer. But God is listening all the time to each person in creation and God rather than giving us what we want, gives us what we need. We know this and reflect our understanding when after the intercessions we pray,

*Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers.*

*Grant that what we have asked in faith*

*we may by your grace receive,*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Praying is a demonstration of faith that God is listening. When we pray, we need to be open to whatever God's answer. We may not like the answer but if we have faith that God will not leave us alone, that there is a purpose in all we are called to do, we are called to embrace God's plan to be truly open to others.

It is often by reflecting on the opportunities, the people we encounter our talents, experiences and so on that we can see the Spirit working in and through us.

Jesus frequently prayed and I not surprisingly suggest that if it was good enough for him, it might be good enough for us. In prayer we can find new meaning and understanding. Jesus that day when he encountered the Canaanite woman responded in an appropriate way for his time but in a way that was prejudicial based on race. By being open to the woman Jesus was able to recognise the depth of her faith in him and her daughter was healed. Paul in his letter to the Roman's is making very clear that while we may have differences, we are all equal in the eyes of God. How I treat the other is how I treat God, and what God gives to me is given for the benefit of all.

Through prayer we like Jesus, can become less prejudiced in how we treat others and having faith learn just where and to whom God is calling us to be present.