

Bible Study for Sunday Aug 20, 2023

Our texts for this Sunday are:

- Isaiah 56:1-8
- Matthew 15: 10-28

Isaiah 56:1-8

5Thus says the Lord: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. 2Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil. 3Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely separate me from his people”; and do not let the eunuch say, “I am just a dry tree.” 4For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— 7these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. 8Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

What questions do you have for this text? What do you think Isaiah is trying to get God’s people to understand? What specifically should they be doing?

What should the people do to prepare for the coming salvation – 56:1? But before you answer that, let’s remember that salvation means the wholeness and health of the whole community. It is not meant to be only a personal thing, but a communal state of being for everyone.

According to this text, who might think they could not be part of that community?

Why do you think “keeping the sabbath” is so important in this text? Who benefits from sabbath and who might never be able to experience sabbath rest? Who are the foreigners in our communities and how do we help them keep a sabbath? Who might be the foreigners among us and what is dangerous about not *seeing* them or the lives they lead?

What do you think of the vision of the house of the Lord being a house of prayer for all peoples (vs 7)? How might that actually challenge us?

Matthew 15:10-28

10Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: 11it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” 12Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard

what you said?" 13He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." 15But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." 16Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? 18But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. 19For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. 20These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile." 21Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22Just 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." 23But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." 24He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 27She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

What do you like in this story? What challenges you?

If the health motto is "you are what you eat" then what might be the faith motto of this passage?

"The challenge of reading this story is that it presents Jesus in a non-flattering light and good boys and girls throughout Christendom have been taught never to consider Jesus in a non-flattering light. Some of those good boys and girls have grown up into biblical commentators and preachers and still will not accept the starkness of this story, insisting that Jesus is merely testing this desperate woman's faith." (Mark Davis, *Left Behind and Loving It*). Thoughts on this comment?

Within earshot of Jesus teaching about what is unclean, comes an unclean woman challenging Him (very convenient timing!). While nameless - like most receiving healing - she is traditionally known as a "justa." Justa Canaanite woman...justa immigrant...you get the picture. I wonder if Jesus is presented in this light to show US something? What do you think that could be?

The woman whose daughter is being tormented by a demon is literally "squawking" to Jesus. Have you ever encountered someone squawking about something? How did it make you feel? How did you (if you did) respond?

How might vs 22-28 (the encounter with the Canaanite woman) be an example of what Jesus is getting at in vs 10-20 for us?

How might our Isaiah text and our Matthew text be telling us similar messages? What is that message?