



THE LORD'S DAY

20th Sunday of Year A

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly page as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at the Catholic Mass for each Sunday of the Year.

The reading guides were written by Fr John Daley (RIP) who served as a Catholic priest in various parishes around the UK and world for 53 years.

Fr John co-founded Watermead in 1992 as a voice for people who wished to share understanding of living their faith through their God-given gifts and talents.

'The Lord's Day' incorporates some of those voices in this presentation and also through its many publications ~ books, resources, cards, music, etc.

Further information on what we produce, our story and the mission of our Christian apostolate can be found by visiting www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk

First Reading

Isaiah 56 : 1, 6-7

What a beautiful opening we have in today's first reading: justice, integrity, salvation are themes for a world redeemed in God's love. Chapter 55 has completed the second part of Isaiah (the "Book of Consolation") in which God's love for Jerusalem and Israel has been joyfully proclaimed . . .

. . . The poor are raised to new life, the covenant between God and the people has been renewed, and the word of God has been given its most beautiful image: the rain and snow that nourish all creation (55:10-11). Creation hymns with joy its loving Creator.

Now, today, comes the third part of the book in which pagans, foreigners, strangers and slaves are invited to share the Lord's blessings. It is us! The world that has come to know God, through knowing Christ Jesus, fulfills these promises. We are invited to the holy mountain, Mount Zion in Jerusalem. We share the prayer of the Temple, offer sacrifice and worship, belong to a world of prayer for all peoples!

But do read the final verses of chapter 56 to see the full picture: prayer and God's house are the wonderful offer, but greed and selfishness can still ruin the world.

Second Reading

Romans 11 : 13-15, 29-32

From the beginning of chapter 9 Paul has been expressing his sorrow at the rejection of Jesus by Israel and the failure to acknowledge the fullness of the promised Messiah made through the prophets. We sense Paul's agony for the people he loves but who reject him as well as the Saviour he has longed to preach since his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Paul's knowledge of the Scriptures allows him to trace the history of faith and the failures, at times, to live it: but allows him to stress that a faithful remnant in every age had carried forward God's promises. In chapter 11 Paul carries that promise into the future - that there will be a fulfilment, the whole world rejoicing in a union of Jew and Gentile who share God's love.

Today's reading sounds a strange note: Paul intends his preaching to the pagans to cause envy amongst the people of Israel! Does this suggest a lesser place for the pagans, they are simply being used to teach the Jews a lesson? We know the game in our own small petty ways: we can make favourites of people, not for their own sake but in order to upset or cause jealousy in others. Is Paul doing that? The lessons that follow in verses 19-23 are severe on the pagans, also. Paul's mood is hard to define.

The second part of today's reading settles into a universal message (vv.29-32) that God wants everyone, Jew and Gentile, to acknowledge their disobedience, past and present, so that all will recognise their need of God's mercy.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 15 : 21-38

Tyre and Sidon were (are) towns on the coast to the north of the Holy Land. That area is part of today's Lebanon and had been part of the Canaan invaded by Joshua and Israel when they came to the Promised Land in the 13th century BC. Matthew calls the lady in the story a Canaanite woman, but Mark calls her a Syro-Phoenician when he tells the story (Mark 7:24-30) - which was the term common in the time of Jesus.

The meeting between Jesus and the woman is unpleasant. She is in pain for her daughter, he seems indifferent. She recognises him in a Messianic title "Son of David" (though not in Mark), but Jesus ignores her at first until her plea is echoed by the disciples who are disturbed by her shouting at them. The woman overhears his reply. She pleads again. Jesus' crude answer is startling - he calls her people "dogs" - a racial slur that seems to reflect his people's prejudice towards foreigners. The woman uses a clever retort that seems to win Jesus' favour, and her daughter is cured. Do read the two accounts of the cure in Matthew and Mark as good examples of telling and re-telling a story.

But we ponder the incident. It is not a pleasant story and seems unworthy of Jesus - ignorance, racial slur, grudging and slow response to a woman in pain. We wonder why it is Gospel? Is Jesus torn about limiting his good news to Israel? Is it the Church's question that the early disciples did not know how to answer? The answer seems to be that the Church's mission is to extend to wherever there might be faith. Thus, to the world.

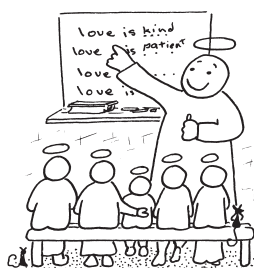
LOVE FINDS THE WAY

A world redeemed;
We are one people;
Jesus learns a lesson.

People of God

Heather learned of God when she was a little girl and loved the truth of a God who gave his son to redeem the world. As a little girl she was impressed that God could love people so much. That personal love for God stayed with her all her life, although she never felt the need to belong to a Church. We who knew her understood that her love did not seem to need Church. She was a loving daughter who looked after her mother so well, a good friend and neighbour. She loved and was loved. There she is, in two of today's readings, seemingly an outsider . . .

Wisdom from the Saints



"God so loved the world that he gave his only son"

The lesson that Heather learned as a little girl at school

*This week I shall . . .
ponder my prejudices . . .*

Questions of Faith

Needing God St Paul is always aware of human frailties, failings and sinfulness - but sees them as acknowledging our need of God. We would be vain and self-sufficient if we thought ourselves good - God is our source of strength and goodness. God dwells in us, and we in God.