



READINGS AND REFLECTION FOR SUNDAY 16 AUGUST 2020
THE 10TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

COLLECT

**Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

PSALM 133

- 1 Behold how good and pleasant it is ♦
to dwell together in unity.
- 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, ♦
running down upon the beard,
- 3 Even on Aaron's beard, ♦
running down upon the collar of his clothing.
- 4 It is like the dew of Hermon ♦
running down upon the hills of Zion.
- 5 For there the Lord has promised his blessing: ♦
even life for evermore.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning is now
And shall be for ever. Amen.**

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Romans 11.1-2a + 29-32

1 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew

29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

Matthew 15.21-28

21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

22 Just 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." 23 But he did not answer her at all. And his

disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26 He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Reflection – this week from Mary-Lou

This week, I've been reflecting on pre-conceptions - those fixed ideas about what is right or wrong, about who is a neighbour, or a danger. We all have them, these pre-conceptions, they're our ways of seeing the world. In this week's Gospel, it seems even Jesus himself has them! It's a bit of a shock, isn't it? Our Jesus,, the great healer, seems closed to the desperate plea of this poor mother. Is he really saying no to helping her just because she's from the wrong race? How would we feel if a doctor or nurse refused to treat someone because they're from the wrong background? What is going on?

This is a key moment. Jesus wasn't just a healer, that is part of who he is, but not the whole. His mission is to let God's chosen people know that the kingdom for which they have waited so long is coming, that he is their rescuer, their Messiah. So what about this poor gentile mother? The wonderful thing about Jesus is that despite his strong and right understanding of who he is and what he has come to do, he allows surprise encounters to break in and he always sees the real person in front of him. It's as if, as Bishop Tom Wright says, the future of the kingdom breaks into the present! Jesus doesn't allow his pre-conceptions to limit his Father's mercy. He sees the amazing faith of this woman - who, remember, is not a member of God's Chosen People the Jews - and at Christ's word, her daughter is healed.

This week I've heard some MPs talking about invaders - those desperate enough to cross the Channel in frail boats at the mercy of people traffickers. I've heard about a black woman MP being driven in a BMW, and the car being stopped by police as a suspect vehicle, because they thought it came from Yorkshire. The MP thinks it was racial profiling, the police disagree. What pre-conceptions are in play in these situations? And who knows, if the US police in Oregon who came across George Floyd that terrible day had really seen him, and had empathy for him as a human being created in God's image, just perhaps that hideous murder might never have happened. How we see the world really matters. St Paul makes clear in Galatians (3.28-29) there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, if you belong to Christ. There is no excuse for anti-Semitism, nor any other sinful prejudice, this has no place in the kingdom of God, who is merciful to all (see the reading from Romans.)

So let's pray that God will take our wrong pre-conceptions, forgive them, and mould them into a way of looking at the world that's more fitting of our King. May he re-shape our hearts so we see others as our neighbours, and enable us to see each person as someone who is loved by God just as much as we are ourselves, whatever their race, the colour of their skin, or their faith. And may we always be full of thanksgiving for the mercy of God that we have received and be ready to show mercy to others, in this world God loves so much.