

Thoughts on the Readings of August 16, 2020

The Common Thread It was promised of old that salvation would come, that God's righteousness would be revealed so that his way might be known throughout the earth. So it is that in Christ, many have been gathered and still more will be gathered. Even those who are considered lost will be found and receive the Lord's irrevocable gifts of mercy, grace, and salvation. God will have mercy even on Gentiles and the lost sheep of Israel—even on you and me.

First Reading - Isaiah 56:1, 6-8 It is too common and too easy to only understand holding fast to the covenant of God as a response to the law. Many think like this: God says, do this, so I will do it so that I will be accepted. This is a fine way to think but not the only way to think about holding fast to the covenant. There is the gospel side, as well. Luther says that the one who holds fast to the covenant is the one who trusts his promises (Luther's Works, Concordia, vol 17, p 263). The one who holds fast to God's covenant is the one who, when unable to perform the law, still trusts his promises.

Psalms 67:1-7 God bestows his blessings upon us through his word, and is not limited to blessing his people only when they keep his word. "God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us." Hear the blessing and be blessed.

Second Reading - Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32 There may yet be mercy, even for those who have been disobedient. God will not reject anyone who believes—Israel or the Gentile. Though both have been disobedient (v32), God remains faithful to himself. He has promised salvation. The disobedience of people becomes a means of displaying the mercy of God.

Gospel - Matthew 15:21-28 Note the mercy of a true king; it extends beyond his own people. The mercy of Jesus reached further than the house of Israel. The faith of a foreigner, indeed, a Canaanite, that old enemy of Israel, roused the healing power of Jesus. More, her faith stirred his heart.

One wonders at such insistent faith. How many importune God without giving up? Is there such faith in all the Church (Matt 8:10)? There is mercy with her Lord.