

Cycle A

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 118

Reading I: Isaiah 56: 1, 6-7

This chapter of Isaiah, which is known as Second Isaiah, contains one of the most compassionate and passionate statements in all of the Bible. Ultimately what is revealed is that there is no place for segregation in the heart and mind of God, and as we are made in God's image, the same should be true for us. God calls all to Himself and extends His love and **mercy** to all. Isaiah makes it abundantly clear that God's loving us should be reflected in our loving others. Isaiah warns the nation of Israel and us that prejudice is an aberration and that no one is to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. Exclusion from the kingdom is a choice made by any individual who chooses to place themselves outside the sphere of God's love.

Reading 2: Romans 11: 13-15, 29-32

Saint Paul speaks of a profound and enduring sorrow that his own people (the Jews) whom he loves, had rejected Jesus. In this exhortation, he is hopeful that his ministry to the Gentiles will arouse a jealousy on the part of the Jews in order for them to be drawn to Christ. Even so, Saint Paul remains optimistic and asserts the truth that *the gifts and the call from God are irrevocable*. God's covenant with Israel still stands, for the **mercy** of God knows no bounds or limits. This unbounded **mercy** is extended to all people, for we are all caught or imprisoned in our own sinfulness. As such, we all are dependent on God's generous **mercy**.

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

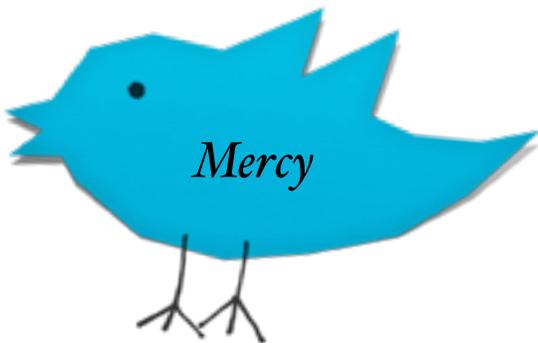
The lively conversation that occurs between Jesus and the Canaanite woman sets the stage for a clear understanding that God's **mercy** cannot be limited to any ethnic or religious group. Remember that this is the gospel of Matthew, the teaching gospel, and as such there will always be those "teachable" moments presented to us. True, the words that we hear from Jesus' lips are not the words we would characteristically expect to hear. The shock value heightens our senses and then provides an opportunity for us to learn. The woman elicits a faith response in the power of God working through Jesus and thus the **mercy** of God is extended to one who is seen as an outsider.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



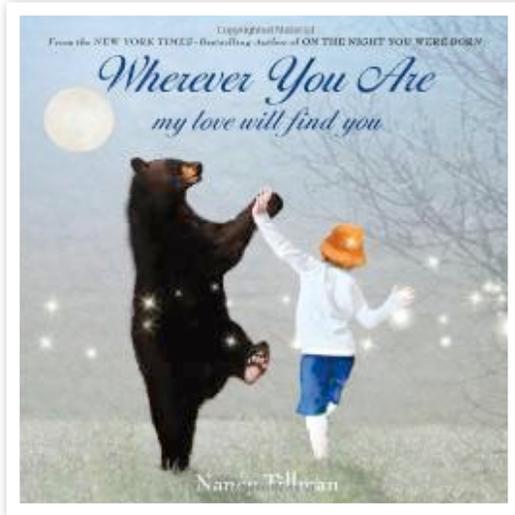
ordinary
time



lectionary
reading



children's
story



Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You

Written by Nancy Tillman

Illustrated by Nancy Tillman

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character
education
activity

God's mercy is nothing less than the unbounded love that God has for us, most especially when when we have sinned and wish to return with a contrite heart.

Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You

This work speaks of parental love that follows a child wherever they go. It is a great parallel for the love and **mercy** that God extends to each and every one of His children. The story illustrates the unbounded love that follows a beloved child no matter where they go or what they do. One of the greatest lines in the book speaks to an understanding of God's loving us so much that He sent LOVE to follow us in the person of Jesus. The excerpt from the book that reflects this is as follows: *I wanted you more than you will ever know, so I sent love to follow you wherever you go!*

Activity

This is a great opportunity to teach about the Corporal Works of Mercy and how they call us to serve as conduits for God's mercy in the world. *The Works of Mercy are loving actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in their bodily or spiritual needs.*

The Corporal Works of Mercy:

1. Feed the hungry, 2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Shelter the homeless, 4. Clothe the naked, 5. Visit the sick, 6. Visit those imprisoned, 7. Bury the dead.

Step One: Review the corporal Works of Mercy with the students and give them examples of each of the works of mercy.

Step Two: Provide each student with 7 placards with letters A through G. The placards will represent the following:

A-Feed the hungry, B-Clothe the naked, C-Give Drink to the thirsty, D-Shelter the homeless, E- Visit the imprisoned, F-Visit the sick, G- Bury the dead.

Step Three: Read aloud the following sentences and ask the students to hold up the placard that that best matches the Work of Mercy with the example.

1. You spend time playing a game with your sister who is sick.
2. You bring flowers to the grave of a family member or friend who has died.
3. You get a cup of juice for your little brother.
4. You collect food for the poor.
5. You pray for the homeless.
6. You clean out your closet and give away clothes that you no longer use.

6. You make a card to cheer up a friend who is in the hospital.
7. You gather linens and blankets to give to the homeless shelter during the winter months.
8. You attend a funeral.
10. You donate a Bible to someone in prison.

Mercy is the compassion God shows towards any of us when we approach God with a contrite heart, that is a willingness to be more loving in our life.



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

With your family, make a list of the special way in which God has created *you*. List a number of things that God has gifted you with in a special way. (For example *I'm generous, kind, responsible, obedient etc.*) These are all examples of how God is at work in you.

Make a **Contract of Service**. Using the list of things you have just made, develop a contract with Jesus.

Contract of Service

Working in the name of Jesus, as part of the body of Christ, I, (fill in your name) will commit myself to the follow work of mercy _____.

Signed: (place your signature here) _____

Approved: (have your mom or dad sign here).

Place the contract somewhere where you will see it everyday.

Look Feel Know Act

Whenever we look around at the many difficulties that exist in the world due to human indifference to one another, it is obvious that the road to reconciliation will be complicated. In reconciling, someone has to be willing to make the first move towards that reconciliation. Often individuals and communities place others outside the circle of God's love, something which God never does. When we come to know and recognize that there are a great many people in need of God's **mercy** it is our responsibility, if we are in such a position, to be the conduit for that **mercy** to be realized. We all have felt as if we were on the outside of any given circle and recalling and remembering that loneliness can move us to open up circles that exclude to be circles that will include. Placing ourselves in the "others' shoes" can compel us to be ministers of God's **mercy** and compassion.

In the scripture passages the Church provides for us this weekend, we see God's overflowing and indiscriminate love. The children's book *Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You* provides a wonderful parallel of a parent seeking to make known to their child their ever-present and far-reaching love. This is the love that God wishes us to know of in all of life's circumstances. When we sin, we place ourselves outside the circle of God's love and God's **mercy** is always beckoning us back into the center of God's love.

Pray that you will reflect God's mercy by being forgiving to those who have offended you, always recognizing that God has always forgiven you for the times you may have offended God. Amen.



**closing
tool**



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