

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Building Bridges

Today's readings encourage us to expand the possibilities of the Kingdom. They remind us to focus on others and adopt the limitless horizons of God. They tell to build bridges and not to burn them.

Third Isaiah continues the joyful message of the previous (2nd Isaiah) to the despair of the people of Judah and Jerusalem. He also addresses non-Jews. In God's eyes, circumcision is not a be-all, end-all. The implications of loving Yahweh is honoring the Sabbath and obeying the covenant.

In the second reading, Paul says that the stumbling of the Jews on Jesus has meant salvation for the Gentiles. Acceptance of the Gentiles will lead some Jews to accept Christ. God shows mercy to all. Israel's stumbling is mercy for the Gentiles. "Gentile disobedience" is seen as disbelief in God.

In the Gospel, the basis for discipleship is not ethnic origin but persistent faith in Jesus. This foreshadows the instruction to the apostles: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations."

"Canaanite" emphasizes the chasm between Israel and the Gentiles. By calling Him Lord, Son of David, the woman accepts the messiah which Israel rejects. She is doubly marginal: a woman and a Gentile. Jesus' at first silence is his intent not to exceed His divine mission. The response to her perseverance is an indication that more than crumbs will fall from the table of Judaism. Her faith erases distinctions between Jew and Gentile.