

When I was in fourth grade I had Mrs. McGuiness. If I remember correctly, I would have been in one of her last classes. I wasn't always one of the best students. If I didn't like a subject, I didn't try too hard at it. And unfortunately she taught one of those subjects...spelling.

I didn't understand why we needed to take time out of our day to learn how to spell words. I knew how to use a dictionary. And I had seen enough science fiction in 1984 to know that computers would eventually fix my spelling for me, as long as I got the word close enough to what it was supposed to be.

We were having this discussion one day in class. And as clever as I thought I was, she was definitely smarter. I'm sure that by the time she had gotten to me, she had had enough students tell her something similar if not the same thing. But she told me something that I have never forgotten. She told me that we stop learning when our fingers grow to be the same length.

I thought long and hard about that statement. I could make my fingers the same length. But, my pinkie was never going to grow as long as the rest of my fingers. I have abnormally short pinkies. I never stood a chance at them reaching the same length of the rest of my fingers.

I told you that story because each week, it seems like I start off with saying that I had an interesting week. And for me, each week is interesting. I find learning and challenging interesting. And trust me, this job is much more challenging than I ever thought it would be.

What was interesting for me this week, was that I learned that a friend of mine is a sexist, a racist, a bigot, and a hypocrite. To be honest, it wasn't a big surprise. He proudly labels himself as a fundamentalist christian. But the level to which he is those things really surprised me.

The initial point of our conversation was about LGBTQ issues and the church. It isn't a big surprise that he and I have two vastly different views on those subjects and how they relate to the church. Our conversation shifted to the role of women in the church, and that surprised me. But what really surprised me was that he believes that everyone who does not follow Jesus in his way will not be saved.

In 1 John we are told that we are all God's children and through him we will be saved. It does not matter who we are or where we came from. We are all God's children. We have been made in his image and we will have a place in the kingdom of heaven.

Our reading from Isaiah today shares this same idea. This reading details who the Lord will save. He is taking everyone to the house of prayer as long as they live the righteous life and hold God in the highest. In this the prophet is depicting that God will accept even those who were not born as Jews, who did not always hold the sabbath, who only made offerings as they could, would still be accepted into the kingdom of heaven.

God does not care where they were born, the color of their skin, their gender, or sexual orientation. What he cares about is that they have heard the Word of God and believe. Whether it is intentionally meant for them or not, they have heard it and believe.

In today's reading from Matthew, the Canaanite woman teaches Jesus this. The story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter are in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Each gospel depicts the woman a little differently. Mark identifies the woman from a geopolitical adversary to where they were at the time, whereas Matthew identifies her as a Canaanite and an enemy to all Jews. So, the idea about her coming to a Jew for help would have been unheard of.

But, she has heard the stories about Jesus. At this point Jesus has held the sermon on the mount. He has fed the five thousand and walked on water. He has challenged the Pharisees

about their illusions about the sabbath and hypocrisy about applying God's laws. So, even though Jesus meant for these teachings to be lessons for Jews and a reminder of their covenant with God, Gentiles were hearing his message as well.

The foreigners, the gentiles, the dogs were all coming to hear Jesus speak and to see his miracles. The Canaanite woman tells him this. They do not care that the message was meant only for the Jews. They want to learn and love God just as much as the Jews and in some cases even more.

O Christ our Lord,  
as the Canaanite woman brought her daughter's need to you,  
overcoming stigma and rejection to do so,  
confident of your healing in her life,  
we bring the needs of others in prayer:

Those for whom pain is a constant companion  
Those who daily live with chronic illness or ill-health  
Those who struggle with the confusion and distress  
of mental illness  
Those who care for and treat people who are ill  
and sometimes have agonizing decisions to face  
Those for whom treatment is not available or affordable  
And for ourselves in our own weakness  
To all your children everywhere,  
**Lord Jesus Christ,**  
**bring healing,**  
**bring peace. Amen.**