

Making Faith Connections - Cross of Hope Small Group Ministry
August 16, 2026
Point/Counter-point – Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Lectionary 20)

Gathering and Check-in ... *share where you've encountered God this week.*

Prayer God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, that your name may be known throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.
(ELW p45)

Introduction: In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need. (from Sundays and Seasons)

Discussion Questions:

Read again Matthew 15: 21-28

- What do you notice about this story as you read/hear it this time?
- What is challenging or confusing as you read/hear it this time?
- What does this story teach us about the life of faith?
- Why is it important to understand that the Canaanite woman was an 'outsider'?
- What are all the different gifts of the healing that Jesus offers to the woman?
- How does Jesus' commendation of the woman's faith inform our own faithful living?
In relationship to God *and* in relationship to others.
- When is persistence part of faith? When might it not be?
- What is the role of mercy in this story?
- How does the church enable your welcome of those not like you?
- How does the church help you open up to others?

Read again Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32

- What do you notice about this story as you read/hear it this time?
- What is challenging or confusing as you read/hear it this time?
- How is Paul both calling and encouraging people to faith?
- How is God using Paul to help the church understand the wideness of God's welcome?
What does this mean for our faithful living?
- How does this approach the question of belonging in the family of God?
- Respond to vv29 'For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.'
- What is the role of mercy in this teaching?
- Enjoy the doxology of vv33-36 at the end of this complex section of Romans (chs 9-11)!

Read and reflect on Isaiah 56:1, 6-8 and Psalm 67 if you'd like.

Prayer Requests and Prayer