

Lectionary readings: Isaiah 56: 1, 6-8; Psalm 67; Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15: 21-28

For reflection and prayer

- **Isaiah 56:** God's offer of salvation is for all. The God of the Old Testament is the same God as in the New Testament. The only difference is in how people perceived this God. God loves every human being and we are called to be like Him so we need to make sure that we reach out to all with accepting love. As the Jews were called to be a light, so we too are called to shine with God's love so that more and more may come to share in that love. Isaiah describes the place of worship as a *'house of prayer for all people'*. We must make sure that all are valued and respected.
- **Psalm 67:** This is a prayer that God will be merciful to us and will bless us and will shine His light upon us. The Psalmist also prays that God will make His ways known throughout the world, and He does that through us. *'Let us abandon ourselves into the Heart of Love.'* (v7 Psalms for Praying) The more we open ourselves to God and live in His heart of love, allowing His love to flow freely in and through us, the more we will make His ways known and let His presence be felt.
- **Romans 11:** Paul is emphasising God's faithfulness and His steadfast love, so that He can never abandon His people, the Jews. Once God sets His love upon us, He never withdraws it. We may withdraw from Him, but He will continue to show His extravagantly generous love to us. There is no such thing as an impossible situation, for there is nothing that God can't use for His

glory and our blessing. So let's do all in our power to encourage one another and to go on seeing those who appear to be spurning God as God's beloved.

- **Matthew 15:** A strange story showing Jesus ignoring the Gentile woman who begged Him to heal her daughter. The disciples wanted Jesus to send the woman away for she was 'bothering' them. When she continues to pester Jesus, He said His mission is to the Jews only. Did He really believe that? Or was He testing the woman? In the end He did heal her daughter and commended this Canaanite woman for her faith. How do we respond when faced with human need - the beggar on the street or the Big Issue seller at the supermarket etc? Do we really believe that everyone is of worth and value and loved by God?

A prayer

Lord God, we confess we don't begin to know the kind of God you are, but we are willing to open ourselves to You so that we experience more of Your wonderful love and kindness and generosity and extravagance. You are calling us, Lord, to make Your ways known where we are by preaching Your gospel with our lives of love and compassion. You are calling us to welcome strangers and newcomers, the disadvantaged and the marginalised, making them feel wanted and valued. You are calling us to listen more and talk less, so that we notice when people are sad and reach out with sensitivity to help them in their need. You are calling us to be open to those who are lonely and offer Your love and acceptance. You are calling us to hear the cries of anguish and pain of those around us and put our arms of love around them so that they know they are understood. Lord, You are calling us to become more like Jesus Himself and be Love, as You are to us. Give us the desire to become like You. Amen.