

PENTECOST: A TIME TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

**Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
August 14, 2011**

**Genesis 45:1-15 or Isaiah 56:1, 6-8
Psalm 133 or 67
Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32
Matthew 15:[10-20] 21-28**

Jesus – Man and God

One of the great mysteries of the Trinity is that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. Most of the time we find it easier to concentrate on his divinity and downplay the human nature of Christ.

We can be grateful that Jesus, during his life here on earth, was fully human because that means he understands us intimately. He has experienced what is human, and therefore he knows us. He is not just a God watching us from up in heaven, but has felt hunger, thirst, pain, fear, anger, and ultimately, he suffered death. He knows us because he has been one of us. We can identify with his anger at the defilement of the Temple (Matthew 21:12,13), his railing against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-36), his lament against Jerusalem's leaders (Matthew 23:37), and his grief over the death of his friend, Lazarus (John 11:35). These are the emotions of a true human being.

One of the more troubling pericopes regarding Jesus and his humanness, however, is the story of the Canaanite woman. Desperate, the woman approaches Jesus and asks for healing for her daughter who is possessed by a demon. At first, in human fashion, he toys with her emotions and not only denies her the healing, but essentially calls her a dog. This is certainly not in keeping with our understanding of Jesus' ministry of inclusion.

Was this his idea of a test? How badly does she need his help? How much would she be willing to stretch her faith? Would she suffer indignities, insult, and rebuff for the sake of her beloved child? Would she indeed "turn the other cheek?"

Sizing up the situation, it is possible the woman thought that desperate times called for desperate measures. She was determined not to leave without the healing for which she had come. But, it is the fully divine Jesus who saw beyond her gender, her ethnicity, and the pain in her quick repartee in response to his challenge. It is this Jesus who immediately recognizes the woman's faith, grit, and wisdom and heals her daughter.

Yes, it is the fully divine Jesus who gives his disciples an object lesson in inclusiveness. It is this Jesus who goes forward to be in ministry with all the world. In the fully-human Jesus we recognize ourselves as we are, but we are called to repentance and transformation by his divinity.

This week's Reflection was prepared by James Harvey, MA, a graduate of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL , who serves on the staff of American Bible Society's Outreach Department, and has been a Lay Leader at the Park Slope United Methodist Church in Brooklyn, NY.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Swaziland – with thanks to God for the Bible for the deaf, for the Good Samaritan project, for the hospital and youth outreach, for the Siswati Study Bible translation project, and that the Society's work has continued despite financial challenges; and with prayers for the staff and board members, for the *Faith Comes By Hearing* program in prisons, schools, Bible clubs and churches, for distribution efforts and relations with the Churches, and for companies and individuals; **South Africa** – with thanks to God for his wisdom and guidance, and for the celebration of the 2011 *Year of the English Bible*; and with prayers for God's blessing on all related activities, so that many more people will receive the life-giving message of the Word; also pray for God's blessing on all the donors, churches, organizations and individuals that support the Society, for the Society's translation projects in Afrikaans, Southern Ndebele and Zulu, for the *Faith Comes By Hearing* program, and for Scripture distribution in prisons; **Lesotho** – with thanks to God for increased Scripture distribution, especially among children, for work among the marginalized, and for a free slot on national radio; and with prayers for God's blessing on efforts to establish more diversified, effective, and meaningful distribution; also pray for the new board, for collaboration with the churches, and for funding for promotional work, board training, and youth initiatives.

Activity Corner: "May All the Peoples Praise You" Montage

Supplies needed: Bible; old magazines; marker; scissors; glue or paste; poster board.

Read Psalm 67. At the end of the reading, invite everyone to respond together: MAY ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE YOU, O GOD! Across the top of a poster board, write the words MAY ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE YOU, O GOD. Using old magazines, look for photos of people of various ages and racial/ethnic groups and create a montage. Invite members of your household to discuss ways they can share God's outreaching love with others. Display the montage throughout the week in an area where you have family devotions. Conclude by singing "In Christ There Is No East or West" or one of your favorite hymns.