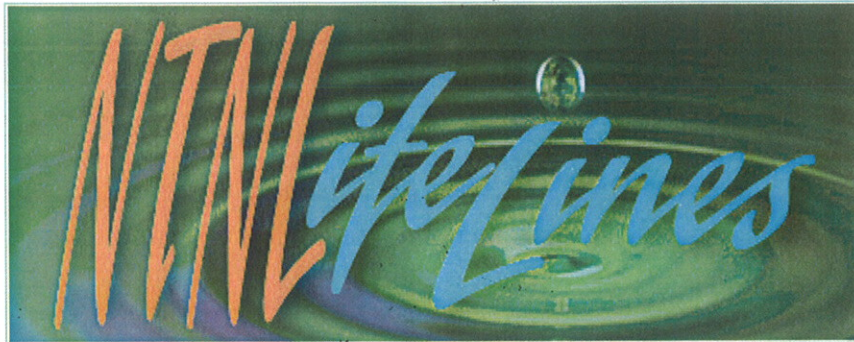


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**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

*A Weekly Devotion for Clergy and Lay Leaders by Bishop Kevin S. Kanouse*

**+Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ.+**

They had been hounding him ceaselessly, trying to find a way to put him away...for he had been challenging their traditions, their laws, their piety. The Pharisees and some scribes were hounding Jesus unmercifully because he wouldn't keep the laws and the traditions...he challenged them to live their faith from their hearts, in love and mercy. They didn't get it, so he fled.

**Is Jesus Really Rude?**

For the first time in Mark's Gospel, we see Jesus facing those who were not Jews. He has escaped to the region of Tyre where he "did not want anyone to know he was there." But soon enough a *woman...a Gentile woman, a "Syrophonician Gentile Woman"* whose daughter has an "unclean spirit" is at his feet begging for Jesus to cast out the demon from her daughter.

Jesus is fed up, he's tired, and he's not sure he wants his reputation to spread outside of Israel. He insults her: "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Some say he was not really being rude; after all, Jesus would not be rude to anyone, would he? They say he was saying this to test her faith...to see if she really would persevere and demonstrate her faith. I, on the other hand, am inclined to take his words at face value. They were words of weariness, laced with a bit of doubt about how this kind of woman could have enough faith.

Don't you feel that way some days? "Just leave me alone. I can't handle another interruption or I think I'll explode. 'They' aren't worthy of my attention anyway...because they are not good enough for me and my time. They are too sinful...they are different...they don't deserve the fine food that Jesus has brought to the table." (Perhaps I speak more for myself than for you; but confession of my sin may help you see your sin, too.)

**Jesus Heals; Love is Conveyed**

Jesus thought that his words of dismissal might gain him some more privacy; but she persisted. "Sir," she said, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go--the demon has left your daughter." She went home and found it to be true.

**Texts for the Week  
of Preparation for  
September 5, 2009**

**Pentecost 14**

- [Isaiah 35:4-7a](#)
- [Psalm 146](#)
- [James 2:1-17](#)
- [Mark 7:24-37](#)

**Text for This Devotion**

*He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go — the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.*

*Mark 7:-27-30*



**This week pray for:**

**Faith, Fort Worth**  
(Pr. Janet Kraatz)  
**St. Martin, Littlefield**  
(Pr. Mike Holmes)

Jesus has been trying to teach, both at home and now abroad, that it is not the good works of the past, nor the traditions that we wear on our sleeves that show how good we are or heals us or forgives us or gives us life. It is faith in Christ alone. This, then, drives us into the world to perform acts of acceptance, mercy, and love for our neighbor.

I think we need to hear this at a time in our Church's life when, instead of pointing fingers and claiming our high road of righteousness over matters of sexuality, we would better serve our Lord through acts of mercy, forgiveness, tolerance and love. If Christ himself was not out in the world condemning those who were different, those who were undeserving, those who were not worthy to be included in the body of Christ, then who are we to be so arrogant that we condemn them, reject them, cast them out until they are good enough to be among us? Perhaps we should be less inclined to judge those whose behavior we do not like, lest we be similarly judged for our sins, which are many in the eyes of others.

#### What's Next?

So, here we are. A few pastors are talking about encouraging their church to cut back on mission support or to leave the ELCA. Will they find a church body that is somehow more pure, more righteous? No, for no church, no denomination, no people are right enough in the eyes of God. Some individuals are talking about withholding their money from their congregation or urging their congregation to withhold their money from the synod and ELCA. Will we hold God's ministry hostage by our money? Is this what Christ would do? Will we stop doing missionary work, supporting colleges and seminaries, let the hungry go ever more hungry, the homeless go even more homeless because we do not like a policy change in our church? Who are we really punishing when we withhold our offerings from God's work and the ministry of his Church?

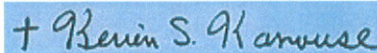
We are the body of Christ and individually members of it. We cannot dismember the Body of Christ, for this is Christ's Church with a mission to *Sow and Grow Disciples of Jesus*. It is through our witness of loving the Lord our God and our neighbor as we love ourselves that we live out what it truly means to be the body of Christ in the world. Perhaps we may yet learn tolerance, as Jesus himself learned tolerance in the region of Tyre that day long ago. Then we may have a real, visible witness in the world.

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*This week, please pray for Pastor Ron Heimsoth who died on Saturday, August 29 at Baylor All Saints Hospital in Fort Worth. A memorial service at will be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fort Worth this Wednesday, September 2, at 10:00 am.*

*Don't forget to register for the Bishop's Convocation at Briarwood, October 12-14, 2009. See our website or the August quarterly mailing to registration information.*

**Let us pray:** Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform sickness into health and death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, and make us a people ready to proclaim your love to the whole world, through Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. *Amen.*

Grace and Peace in Christ,



Kevin S. Kanouse,  
Bishop

#### Candidates attending Seminary Texas Lutheran University

ELCSL Pr.-in-Residence  
Pr. Kate Warn

[Click here to visit her blog about life in Sierra Leone.](#)

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