Reflection for 20th Aug. Matt 15.12-28

Tyre and Sidon, gentle cities on the coast, of now Lebanon, were historic enemies of Israel; A place where Jesus chose to go and perform miracles.

The disciples were out of the comfort zone; out of their own territory. They told Jesus to get rid of the woman, but Jesus used the opportunity to highlight the fact that Faith, wherever it is, and whoever expresses it is acceptable to God.

Jesus reflects he Prophet Isaiah where he said in the 1st reading ‘ my house shall be a house of prayers for all peoples’.

I suggest that the Gospel today challenges us to look at our own comfort zones, and invites us to go beyond them, so we may witness the coming to faith of people we do not ordinarily mix with or encounter.

There is no doubt we are very good at welcoming people who come into our churches. It is safe to say our churches are our comfort zones. The challenge is to extend ourselves into groups and communities around us who, for one reason or another don’t or won’t come into our church.. This is not so much trying to get people to come into our church but is going out to where people are at… I suppose it begs the question what are we offering that people don’t have?

I was home on leave one time, my dad and a couple of his friends were in the house and my Dad, in an attempt to wind me up, asked me, in front of his cronies, ‘Noel, what are you selling in Nigeria? Everyone is selling something’. I had a quick answer for him because the programme I was involved with is the SELL programme.

But is it a fair question? What are we selling? What business are we in? What is it that we have that others need? Are we just another club on offer, with U3A, walkers or golf? What brings us here, week after week that really matters to our lives?

St. Paul in I Corinthians 13 says three things that really matter. Faith, hope and love; the woman in the gospel was vindicated by her faith.

Above all else we are selling hope. No matter what happens or how bad life gets, there is hope that all will be well.

Love is the primary purpose of our motivation for being Disciples of Christ. Love as seen in service, shown in respect for all peoples, without discrimination.

We do in fact attempt the impossible, ‘to love our enemies’.

I want to conclude by quoting a former Bishop of Grenada, who used to say,

‘why is it that people who need love the most are the ones who least deserve it?’