

## **Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: Monday 21<sup>st</sup> August: Some Notes**

**Isaiah 56: 1, 6-8:** You can argue whether Isaiah is thinking about non-Jews becoming Jews, or about non-Jews joining with Jews in the Kingdom of God. But what is very clear is that God does not favour people because of their race but because of their willingness to listen to Him, and respond with those basic social values of justice and righteousness. These things are the cement of a civilised society. The left-out verses are also worth reading: eunuchs couldn't fulfil their traditional core male role, but they are also valued; there is a place for them; and the promise of a heritage for those incapable of carrying their names into a fresh generation is lovely.

**Psalms 67:** Another inclusive (all nations) scripture; and a psalm to remember. Since the psalm is so short, it is worth looking at more than one version. Which of the versions you read best captures the music *and* the meaning?

**Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32:** Paul, the deeply orthodox Jew, struggles with his conviction that the Jewish people and the Jewish faith have missed the boat. Incidentally, he reminds us of what we owe to our Jewish brothers and sisters, and what we still share with them. He also hints (more than that?) that God Himself feels the pain of Jewish rejection, and longs for His Chosen People to choose Him, in His "new" revelation. Once again, we have to struggle with the notion that God determines who believes and who doesn't; and indeed with the notion that the "deafness" of the Jews led to the conversion of the gentiles. P.S. Most of the first Christians were Jews! Do add in verse 33.

**Matthew 15: 21-8:** Including foreigners again. This is a really intriguing story. Jesus convinced that His mission is to the Jews rather than the gentiles? Jesus learning from a female customer? Jesus using rather ... very?.... insulting language to a woman seeking healing for her daughter? How do you explain what was said and done? (As a footnote: Matthew opens his Jesus story with the Baby Jesus being greeted first by gentile Wise Men. Luke reports the Shepherds – who were probably gentiles (Bedouin), and, if they were Jews, were rather non-observant Jews since they couldn't stick with Sabbath observance.)