Joseph clearly has some feelings about the way he was treated by his brothers. He says that everything happened as part of God’s plan but if he actually believes that God orchestrated his situation of being a right hand man to an Egyptian Pharoah he is not going with the flow…so to speak. He is angry with his brothers and doesn’t seem to have a lot of trust for his own family. His dad of course has set an example that does not engender a lot of trust. Joseph has been put in a position of power. He has control over the food supply and without access to this his own family would perish. He puts his brother Simeon in jail as collateral. He plants an item in Benjamins bag to look as though he stole it. He does all this and then identifies himself to his brothers as Joseph. Talk about burning your bridges…Can you imagine their surprise? Their lives are now dependent on the brother they threw into a pit. Joseph weeps on his brothers shoulders as he tells them who he is…the reconciliation and strong feelings he has in this time of scarcity and famine are a stark contrast to one another. He sends them back to let his father know of his power and the fact that he is alive. We as humans often try to relinquish responsibility and accountability by saying God is in control of every minute detail of our lives. It might be more helpful to see how God is present in every part of our lives and do what we can to make that presence more fully known.

These three readings all contain an element of wondering who is in and who is out of the favor of God…This concept is not new to todays’ world but the response by humanity is the same and will be until we get it and live it. Humanity is constantly finding groups of people to oppress. Women have long lived in a world which is largely controlled by men. The narrative in the history books is written from a male perspective. The Bible was written by men. Women have not been given equal pay, equal opportunities, or a share in leadership and positions of power. God created and loves us all. We can see Paul continuing to wrestle with the question of the validity of God’s covenant with the Jewish people. First of all, God always keeps her covenants even when we fall short. Secondly, Jesus was Jewish and it’s like asking if God is opposed to God’s self. It’s important to look at the greater picture but it’s difficult when we have such a narrow viewpoint on which to base our perspective. Last week we talked about knowing people and cultures that are different from our own and that is part of how we widen our understanding of other people. Another part is by just treating everyone with love and dignity. No matter what you’ve heard about them or your initial feelings. We don’t know the whole perspective. Even Jesus, a man who was raised in a culture that valued males above females, probably would not even have spoken to or touched a woman he didn’t know under normal circumstances. Even, Jesus seems to learn a lesson in today’s gospel showing how our own experiences, upbringing and culture effects are understanding of others. He does not come across in a good light when he compares this Caananite woman to a dog as she begs him for help for her daughter. There is not really a way we can examine this reading without thinking that Jesus seems to have been enlightened by the end of it by the knowledge that even this lowly woman, and her daughter were worthy of healing. They too, are children and beloved by God. As I thought about the women in this world who have been Holy Troublemakers I start with my grandmother and my mom. My grandmother was not quite 5 foot tall but a force to contend with. She was the matriarch of our family for many years and loved me fiercely. My mom raised me by herself and did it in a small town in Port Huron trying to promote change in a community that was very conservative and to bridge the racial inequalities present there. She was a wonderful English teacher at the local community college and could have taught anywhere. There have been many women leaders in the world that we don’t hear much about. Women who probably at one time in their lives received treatment like the Canaanite women in the gospel. Who were ignored, told to go away and be quiet. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was one such woman. She became the President of Liberia in 2006. She was the first elected head of state in Africa. We still have not had one in the U.S. Not only did Sirleaf, sign into effect a freedom of information bill but she reduced national debt, formed a truth and reconciliation committee to investigate crimes from the Liberian civil war. She was committed to fighting global dictators, corruption and poverty and empowering women and girls. She along with two other women leaders Leymah Gbowee and Tawakaal Carmen won the nobel peace prize in 2011 for their non-violent struggle to promote peace and womens rights. These women from Liberia and Iran both countries with traditions in male patriarchy. These woman did not let their voices be silenced in the world. They too had faith in their causes to make this world more peaceful and equitable for women and all people. As we think about the readings today and throughout the week there is a lot to explore. Through the line of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph we see that they were not perfect men. They were men of their time who were entrusted with great responsibility. They realized that God was at work throughout their lives and the lives of their people. Paul too was trying to figure out how to reconcile a God who included both Gentiles and Jews and realized without a doubt that yes God chooses both. Jesus has an epiphany that even with his perspective of patriarchy and the role of men they still needed to include a women and her daughter who had great faith in their God. Today we remember a great women leader who would not let her voice be silenced. I invite you to hear this anthem by a woman named Lang Leav, born in a refugee camp and who is now a writer who is empowering women throughout the world:

“Woman’s Anthem
Women are fierce. They are powerful. No matter what language they speak, how they dress, or the work they choose to do. What matters is they have a choice, and the freedom to carve out a life for themselves.
As long as we know women who are strong and resilient, we must respect them, carry them forward, lift them up.
For they are the product of all our other selves, the women we were, the ones we strive to be, the collective struggle of our mothers, our sisters, our daughters.
Our salvation will only come if we stand together”

― **Lang Leav,**[**Love Looks Pretty on You**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/64422394)