

Mark 7:24-37
Pentecost 15
St Mark – September 5, 2021
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The Love of God

She's tried everything, healers and mystics. She's sacrificed to countless Gods and talked to everyone she can think of and still, still the fits, convulsions, yelling and cursing, crying, trembling, it all still keeps happening.

Her closest friend said she heard that a Jew is in town, a Jew that is causing a lot of talk in his own land. They say he can heal people, people who have never been able to be healed by anyone before. Her friend said that she's heard he even has power over unclean spirits.

She leaves her house. She's going to find him.

Her friend is with her daughter now. Her friend who is the only one willing to watch over her daughter on the rare occasions she leaves the house.

Her husband died before this demon descended on their daughter. Her family has abandoned her, except for the money they send that keeps her alive.

Her neighbors watch her suspiciously, watching to see if there is anything she does that will explain why the demon has taken hold of her daughter. Watching, to see if she too will be consumed.

She pushes all these thoughts from her mind as she makes her way to the house she's been told about. She pushes everything out of her mind and concentrates on finding the Jew. A Jew...

He's a Jew. She's a Gentile. Will he help her? Will he help her daughter? He will. He must!

As she looks for the house she's filled with doubt. She may have the wrong house; they might not let her in. No one seems to know for sure if he's even in town.

But, that's not her biggest worry. She's a Gentile, a Gentile who lives in the region of Tyre. A region that is known to be hostile to Jews!

As she hurries toward the house she thinks to herself, "He'll probably ignore me or even worse, have me thrown out."

As she continues onward she begins to hope the hope she gave up long ago, the hope that her little daughter will come back to her. That her little girl will no longer be wracked with pain and that her mind will be that of an innocent child once again. Hope that this nightmare will end.

She finds the house and goes to the door. It opens and she enters.

She finds Jesus and drops to her knees as she bows at his feet. Immediately she feels incredibly at peace. There seems to be an energy about him like nothing she's every felt before and a sense of compassion that radiates from his being.

He looks tired and a little surprised that she knows who he is.

Then she starts to tremble. She knows she is about to ask of him something that only he can do, something she has no right to ask.

Her daughter's life depends on the next few minutes. She is as sure of that as she is of her own name.

She makes her request and is overcome by a feeling of calm as she bows before him.

His answer is a question and not an unexpected one. From all she has heard of him his focus has been on his fellow Jews.

It is the Jews he has been teaching, healing, and feeding.

She heard he fed thousands with just a little boy's bread and fish and that there was much, so much food left when the enormous crowd had their fill.

Her answer to his question comes easily, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

Jesus replies, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” and she knows he speaks the truth.

In Matthew’s account of this story, Jesus’ reply is, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Jesus is moved by her humility. Jesus is moved by her faith.

I’m reminded of the woman who suffered from a hemorrhage and was healed when she touched the hem of Jesus’ garment.

Both these women knew that the slightest contact with this man held insurmountable power. Both women showed great faith.

Today’s story is unusual. Jesus has traveled to a region that has been an unfriendly neighbor to Galilee for a very long time. The city of Tyre was founded about 2700 years before this story takes place and it is a place spoken of in many books of the Old Testament.

Tyre is first mentioned in Joshua when we are told that it is a fortified city, fortified with a wall around it and has a very strong position geographically. In Second Samuel we learn that it was never conquered by the Israelites.

It’s been said that, “It is remarkable that Jesus would visit such a place—except that he came to break down the barriers that divide people. He came to save people—not to exclude them.”

That reason for Jesus to come to such a place, a place that is described as being “hostile to Jews”, makes perfect sense to me. I believe Jesus is everywhere, just as his people are everywhere.

Jesus did seem to focus his efforts on Jews. He most notably put a great deal of time and effort into preparing his Apostles, preparing them for the commission he would give them to spread the Gospel, to spread news about Him to the four corners of the world.

From those Apostles came the Church. The Church we know today. The Church WE are today. Christ's body on Earth.

Jesus' Love, the love of our Christ, the love of the Christ who lived, died, and resurrected for every soul, his Love is to embrace, not to exclude.

This example of Jesus loving even Gentiles continues with the second encounter we read about today. The reading gives his itinerary, letting us know that he stays in a region primarily made up of Gentiles even though he is now not far from Galilee.

Healing the deaf man who had an impediment in his speech is also done in private and he instructs those present to keep what they have witnessed to themselves. They don't.

Jesus' ministry was primarily with Jews, but it is clear in the scriptures that his sacrifice was for all.

Today's Gospel reading reminds us of that, just in case we mistakenly think his miracles benefited only the Jewish people when he took human form on Earth.

The woman who came alone and had no right to ask and the man whose friends brought him to Jesus and begged his case both found precious healing.

Both were healed in private. Both met Jesus without an audience and that is the way it often is with Jesus today. We meet him alone when we quietly thank him for the beauty that surrounds us. We meet him alone when our need pours out of us like a rushing river.

Jesus is with us, sharing our joys and sorrows. When we call on him for guidance, strength, comfort, healing, when we call on him he answers.

Sometimes that answer takes the form of a kind word offered by a stranger or a problem that is solved almost miraculously.

Sometimes his answer is known to God alone.

Jesus, God, The Holy Spirit, the three in one, The Triune God of Peace cherishes each and every one of us.

May we all take that Love in and let it fill us. May we all know that Love and share it with others every day of our life.