

Lenten Devotional March 28, 2022

Scripture

Mark 7:24-3

24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, 25 but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 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." 28 But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go - the demon has left your daughter." 30 So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Devotional

The Rev. Greg Steible '14

Did we just see Jesus get schooled by a Syrophenician? It's a notoriously tricky passage to interpret. Tricky isn't the right word: disturbing is better. Where's the justice for this woman? Why does Jesus seem so rude? Is his healing of her daughter some sort of apology? She comes, she bows down at his feet, she begs for help, and in response it looks like he calls her a dog. Some will tell you Jesus was just testing her, but perhaps a more powerful Lenten moment is to see how Jesus rectifies his (perceived) gaffe.

How often do we scoff at those in pain? It's hard to admit, I know, but I also recognize the schadenfreude associated with watching the news. I've experienced how slowly highway traffic crawls near an accident—how often it's motivated by "better them than me" instead of any real compassion. How quick we are to turn people away rather than to offer them real, relational healing and hope. Or maybe it's our best intentions that have been interpreted as hurtful and judgmental. How can we be more like Jesus? How can we turn our scoffs into moments of real compassion?

As followers of Christ, we are called to embody love in the world. When we miss those opportunities to embody love, we aren't alone. Christ is right there with us in our missteps to help rectify our wrongdoing and to point us toward healing and wholeness. Christ empowers us to offer apologies and to love.

Prayer

Have mercy on us, O Lord, and help us to have mercy on others. You call us to love other people, but so often we assume they deserve what they get. Free us from these broken attitudes and use us to build up the world in love. Amen.