

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Pentecost Sunday — September 5, 2021

“And she begged him...” (Mark 7:26)

Jesus, because he was exhausted, was out in Gentile territory by himself, trying to hide from the crowds of people. A Syrophoenician finds him, a desperate woman, who comes to Jesus, falls at his feet, and begs him to cast out an unclean spirit from her daughter. When she first pleads with him, Jesus responds in a disrespectful manner that he came to save the lost sheep of Israel. She is clearly an outsider with no right to request anything of Jesus. He pushes her away using abrupt, rude, language. She is a “dog” who has no part of the lost sheep of Israel.

Amazingly, the woman persists and argues with Jesus. She says, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Wow! Jesus is impressed not only by her argument but by her persistence. He gives her what she so desperately seeks and miraculously heals her daughter.

Some people are troubled by the way Jesus brushes her off. That doesn’t sound like the compassionate Jesus we have come to know and love. Others are troubled that at first Jesus says “no,” and then after hearing the woman’s argument, he says, “yes.” Does Jesus change his mind? Is the divine Jesus susceptible to human logic?

Perhaps we should not speculate but rather stay with the plain facts. A desperate person came to Jesus, an outsider, a stranger, someone from the margins of society, and as far as we know, never met Jesus and knew little about him. But she dared to argue with Jesus and he responded. Jesus marvels at her faith, determination, and persistence.

What do we make of this story? We should not think of this story as a step-by-step method to get what we want from Jesus. Perhaps it may be possible to not only see the desperate woman, but to see Jesus. Perhaps we are like the woman who comes before Jesus, pleading. She shows us that Jesus is not only Lord, but is also the one who has compassion for the desperate. She may not know everything about Jesus, but somehow, she knows that he is her hope.

Remember this woman when you face times of desperation. Go ahead and request what you think you need. But don’t just request, plead, beg, implore, and even argue! Do so with faith that he hears. Jesus is Lord of the desperate. Amen.

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