**9/8/24**

**Two Stories in One**

**Mark 7:24-37 (NRSV)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Good morning and welcome to all of you! Thanks again for joining us on what seems to be a continuation of last week’s headlines and message. Now you may be sitting there and thinking to yourself the stories from last week to this week are quite different, and I will verify that they are, but some parts are not. This is where I can say while studying and preparing for this Sermon that I was not sure that I imagined revisiting how appalled the Pharisees and scribes were with the disciples’ actions of eating with defiled hands. However, this is precisely where I recognized that Jesus travelled to so-called impure or unclean lands and people in our story today. I am also not very sure that the response from Jesus calling the Pharisees and scribes out to actually pay attention to that which comes from their hearts would resurface either. However, we actually get a little flip or reverse of that as the Syrophoenician Woman in today’s story calls out Jesus to care for all of humanity, and not those he only feels called to. I hope I did not shock you too much relating all of that, but it shocked me a bit the more I studied and broke things down. That is also the very cool part about our lectionary cycle as the Gospel Readings and overall Message have a certain kind of flow about them. They often manage to reconnect and have you hearkening back in your effort of moving forward. We also come the realization that the stories and the message call us to respect the lives of those who have went on before us, and to adapt and mix what we have learned into our daily lives and mission moving forward as well.

Now, that I have scrambled your brains, and attacked things in a little different manner than you may have expected out of the gate with my sermon, I want to offer you some different mindset here too. As it was during my approach to studying and breaking down this Gospel Reading that I was left scratching my head in an effort of trying to remember why the first part of it seemed so darn familiar. So, naturally I checked my files on my computer, and then I actually had an ugh huh moment. I realized that the story of the Syrophoenician Woman was actually part of my New Testament Seminary Class Final. Hearkening back to the not so far past actually. This is where I was reminded that stuff you learn in school is applied to life after all. This is where I was also reminded that we are allowed to revisit things and relearn from them as well. With that being said, I am also blessed to be able share that very learning and relearning with you all too.

So, you may be thinking to yourself what I had to actually do in the particular Final. Well, I actually had to do a Text Study by evaluating each line of verses 24 to 30, and to top it all off I had to do it from fourteen different translations of the Bible. In my very efforts I had to deconstruct each verse and report anything significant that I found through and about the various translations of each verse. At first, I will honestly admit that I was not too sure I would even like doing this. I must also admit that it seemed rather overwhelming and tedious. However, over the course of completing my Final, I actually thought the process was kind of cool as it allowed for some very deep focus, as I am sure you all can imagine. It was also through that very process that I found the Word and the Message leaping right out quite differently, and at other times I found the Word and the Message actually being very synonymous and similar in nature. There were also even times that the Word and the Message seemed so much clearer, or it even redefined itself just by some simple shifts in the wording. Now, if you have never actually done this kind of Text Study before then I would invite and urge you all to try it. For it is quite a different kind of way to study and reflect, and even immerse yourself. I could even happen to make your first crack at it a little easier, just as our professor did for our class, and I could share the resources from Seminary with you if you so desire. That way it actually cuts down on some of your time and effort, and that way you won’t feel as if it were such a task, or possibly even get frustrated in your efforts to do this kind of study. I will leave that option up to you of course. As always you can see me after our Worship Service, or send me a text message or email if you wish.

So, what I also had to caution myself with here, and not get so caught up in, was that there in fact are two different but similar stories in our Gospel Reading. It is very tempting to focus on one, but that is not the goal, and at first glance one might not actually think that they are similar at all. However, that is the very reason that they are shared together. So, in my studying and reading efforts to focus on both I knew I had to make it a point to make sure that I imparted information about the experiences of release, relief, and restoration in these stories with you. In the headlines, of these two stories there were actually some harsh tones, there were actions and faith exhibited, and then of course there were even some things that seemed rather awkward. There also were some points that seemed to lie in the background, and just like any good journalist or student, I had to dig them out in an effort to make sure they were brought to the surface for all of us. As each point plays a vital role in the overall situations and stories.

What I also found rather awesome was the fact of how Jesus acted, reacted, and how he actually was learning and growing right in front of the people, and even our very own eyes. Now, of course you may be sitting there and scratching your head following that last statement of mine, and of course you also may have missed it as your mind trailed off. So, let me actually repeat it for you, just so you can catch it or hear it a slightly different way and let it sink in a little before I press on. (What I also found rather awesome was the fact of how Jesus acted, reacted, and how he actually was learning and growing right in front of the people, and even our very own eyes.) So, you may be sitting there and thinking to yourself that Jesus was of course in line with God, and of course with the Holy Spirit. So, how exactly was he learning and growing? This is where I remind you, and even myself, that we are blessed to have a Triune God who made sure that he was relatable and real, and this is precisely where we are reminded of his very human nature. In fact, it is in this very human nature that we get to witness Jesus dealing with real life situations and people exactly how you and I might even encounter them to this very day. There were no practice scenarios or examples like you might get on a quiz, research paper, or a job interview. Jesus was actually on the ground in action in real life! Those scenarios play out in how Jesus was dealing with the rather forward and snarky actions of the Syrophoenician Woman, and how he was dealing with and eventually healing her daughter from the distance, and even sending this caring and concerned mother home trusting his word. It is also through the kind of passive actions of the deaf man with the speech impediment, where Jesus healed and restored him with physical touch and word, or even whether things occurred through the very trusting and caring actions that were exhibited by his friends who even brought him to Jesus and desired the healing for him in the first place.

What actually is also very front and center here in both of these stories, and that is whether we realize it or not, is the plain and simple fact that each and every one of these people exhibited some form of genuine faith. Now it may not have been said directly, but it was indeed through that very faith they felt only Jesus could provide the healing and restoration necessary for these afflictions of various natures.

What we also come to learn is that they were not people Jesus would typically be dealing with, or they were not people he would even be talking to as per his upbringing and customs. It was almost as if he traveled to this area in spite of those Pharisees and scribes from last week, and was dealing with the so-called defiled and dirty people and lands. Despite not feeling he would be known here, his actions and ministry, who he was and what he did, were way more well known than he may have even considered. Looking at it from an alternative angle he also may have been traveling to these places further off for possibly some separation, quite time, and refuge. However, folks came to know and get help from Jesus, through God and the Holy Spirit acting in and through him showing no partiality. I mean this may have ruffled Jesus’ feathers a bit as he was trying to relax, or maybe even trying to escape from people for just a little bit that he felt he was only called to help. We also even get to see that human side of Jesus as he exhibits a bit of frustration when he is called on to carry out his call and commission here. He may have been called into action when he felt he could just simply slip away to recharge. We even hear a bit of attitude or resent to act through his initial interaction with the Syrophoenician woman where he quite frankly even compares her to a dog. We might not think that was very nice, or a very Jesus reaction, but it also was the way and manner he grew up that slipped out accidentally. There is of course no excuse for it, but we also get to see where he searches and reexamines his heart, just like he called the Pharisees and scribes to do last week. He quickly readjusts his ways and actions as this woman reacted to his slight blunder. This is also where I say good for her, and I say good for us when we give a little pushback in our lives. Things may not often occur in God’s timing or in the way we desire, but it does not mean that we should not show a deeper faith and desire for the things to come. We are not simply questioning or doubting or getting frustrating, we are just simply expecting more or the best from our Triune God who we know can do all things.

If we step back a bit we also come to hear and learn that the mission and the Message were taking on an even more global impact. Yes, I also did in fact bring up that Jesus’ travels were vital to spreading the message. Man, this is where I will admit that over time, I have actually been learning that geography is way more vital to things than I ever thought, and this is where I should reconsider complaining about it during my Seminary classes. After all, Jesus could have kept his Message and mission to the area where he was born and grew up in, but this was not the case or his very call and commission, and it is not the case and call and commission for you and I either. This is also the very blessing of us being on the conference call and in the pews as it allows for each of us to hear and explore things together. This is precisely why I thank you each and every week for your very presence, as it is vital to growing and changing, resting and recharging, and being able to get fed through this community so we can go back out there in the world and be doers of the Word. This is precisely where we come to realize how awesome our Triune God is, and there is no possible way that we cannot be excited to go out there and share the Word with others. So, let us travel into the lands we may not perceive we need to go or are wanted, and let us talk to everyone who may or may not talk to us. Showing them who we are and what the Message and the Word are about while showing compassion and care is what it is all about, and oh yeah, leave the rest up to God.

Amen and Amen.

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year B 2024

 September 8th, 2024

 16th Sunday After Pentecost

(2) Bible.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) NEW Text Study word due midnight Wednesday 26 June

 NTF Text study work

 Passage Intro – Wednesday 26 June

 Text: Mark 7.24-30 (Syrophoenician Woman; omitting 7.31-37)

 Vincent Piekarski’s New Testament Final Exam 2024

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 The life of faith is not homogenous; every journey is distinct

 September 8, 2024

 Commentary on Mark 7:24-37

 Courtney V. Buggs

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 In last week’s gospel text, Jesus took to task the Pharisees and scribes for their

 ideas of “purity” and their judgment of those who did not conform to their standards

 of piety. Now, as if to prove his point, Jesus heads off into “impure” territory, the

 gentile region of Tyre.

 September 9, 2018

 Commentary on Mark 7:24-37

 Elisabeth Johnson

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus’ offensiveness is a fact we must face

 September 5, 2021

 Commentary on Mark 7:24-37

 C. Clifton Black

(8) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 The key dynamics of this story seem easy enough to grasp.

 September 6, 2015

 Commentary on Mark 7:24-37

 Micah D. Kiel

(9) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Now here’s a Gospel reading capable of kicking off a church’s new program year

 with gusto.

 September 9, 2012

 Commentary on Mark 7:24-37

 Matt Skinner

(9) SermonCentral.com

 Surprised By Grace

 Contributed by Mary Erickson on Sep 7, 2021

 Scripture: Mark 7:24-37

 Denomination: Lutheran

**Introduction**

 James tells us to stop showing favoritism in the assembly, treating the rich visitor

 with more honor than the poor one. Jesus himself seems to show partiality in his

 first response to the Syrophoenician woman in today’s gospel. Was he testing her

 faith in saying Gentiles don’t deserve the goods meant for God’s children? Or

 was he speaking out of his human worldview, but transcended those limits when

 she took him by surprise with her reply? Either way, the story tells us that God

 shows no partiality. Everyone who brings a need to Jesus is received with equal

 honor as a child and heir.

**Mark 7:24-37 (NRSV)**

 In Mark’s gospel, encounters with women usually signify turning points in Jesus’

 ministry. Here, a conversation with a Syrophoenician woman marks the beginning

 of his mission to the Gentiles.

 24[Jesus] 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,25but

 a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about

 him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. 26Now the woman was a

 Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her

 daughter. 27He 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.” 28But she answered him, “Sir, even

 the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” 29Then he said to her, “For

 saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” 30So she went

 home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

 31Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards

 the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32They brought to him a deaf

 man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand

 on him. 33He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers

 into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34Then looking up to heaven,

 he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” 35And immediately

 his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36Then

 Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more

 zealously they proclaimed it. 37They were astounded beyond measure, saying,

 “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to

 speak.”

**Theme Statement: What is God doing in or behind this text?**

**(Active verb, saving or empowering action, complete thought, and a simple short sentence)**

Folks came to know and get help from Jesus, through God and the Holy Spirit acting in and through him showing no partiality.

**Four Page Method**

**Page One (Trouble in the Text) (Characters Only)**

People are hurting in so many different ways and in need of healing and hope.

**Page Two (Trouble in the World) (Us Only)**

We are hurting in so many different ways and in need of healing and hope.

**Page Three (Grace in the Text) (God & Characters)**

Healing and Restoration is for everyone!

**Page Four (Grace in the World) (God & Us)**

Healing and Restoration is also for us!

**Sermon Unity Elements: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine**

**Text (41-42):** Mark 7:24-37 (NRSV)

**Theme (42-48):** Release, Relief, and Restoration

**Doctrine (48-50):** Faith

**Need (50-52):** Healing and Restoration

**Image (52-56):** Arms Wide Open

**Mission (56-57):** The mission and the Message were taking on an even more global impact.