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St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter

October 2021



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Persistence

A sermon based on Mark 7: 24-38

The bread of life is in the community and the people around us. The characters of people have strong influences on us as we grow up and they still guide the way we think in our adult lives. I'm sure you can think of someone or something that shaped a decision you made many years ago.

In the reading from St Mark, he tells us that Jesus moves from Jewish provinces to Tyre where he didn't want anyone to know where he was.

Why? you might think?

Well, Jesus had been spending all his time ministering in Jewish places, and that ministry was drawing large crowds, and he was exhausted, So Jesus left the Jewish provinces and moved to the Gentile territory. Tyre, in order to get some rest.

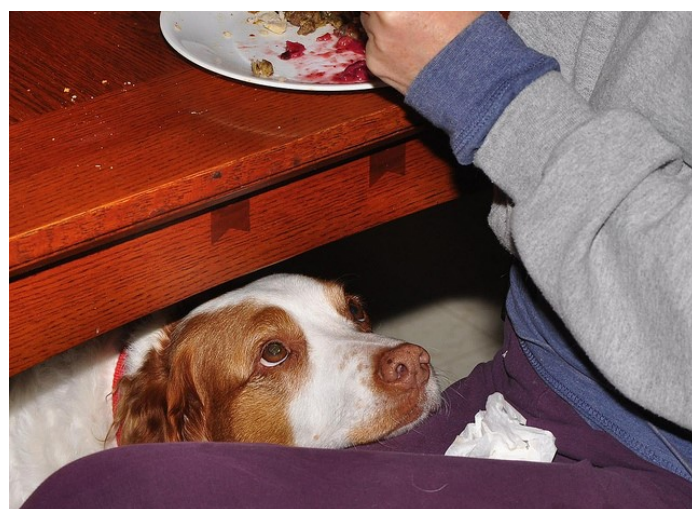
But it didn't work. A woman hears of his arrival and makes her way boldly to him. Because of Tyre's closeness to Judea, she would have known the Jewish customs.

She also knows that she has none of the religious, moral, and cultural authorisations to approach a Jewish Rabbi – she is a Phoenician, a gentile, a pagan, a woman, and her daughter has an unclean spirit. She knows that in every way according to the standards of the day, she is unclean and therefore not allowed to approach any devout Jew, let alone a rabbi.

But she doesn't care. She enters the house without an invitation, falls down and begins begging Jesus to exorcise a demon from her daughter. And she keeps on begging and will not take NO for an answer.

You might well wonder why she kept going...

Isn't this something that parents do for their children - pursue every avenue to get the best for them? Parents don't have a scale from cowardice to courage, if your child is in trouble, you simply do what it takes to save her or him. Your character changes automatically to determination and persistence. This woman was a desperate mother who was willing to push through the barriers.



Jesus' response to her as she is down on her knees begging is a parable...

"First let the children eat all they want," Jesus told her, "For it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." [Mark 7:26,27].

In NT times most dogs were scavengers, wild, dirty, uncouth in every way. Their society was not a canine loving society like ours. So, to call someone a dog was a terrible insult.

In Jesus' day the Jews often called gentiles dogs

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because they were unclean. Not God's chosen people.

But the world of Jesus' ministry was changing.

Jesus is using a parable to explain a likeness. He used a word for Dogs that meant puppies. She was a mother; He knew she would understand that puppies don't get fed before the children.

Then she says, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

This was as much as to say,

"OK, I understand, I'm not a Jew, I'm not from Israel, I don't worship the God that the Israelites do. Therefore, I don't have a place at the table. I accept that."

It's amazing... she doesn't take offence. She says, "All right, I may not have a place at the table – but there's more than enough on the table for everyone in the world, and I need mine now."

She is wrestling with Jesus in a very respectful way, and she will not take NO for an answer. She is being very persistent !!!

"Lord, give me what I deserve on the basis of my goodness,"

Or,

"give me what I *don't* deserve on the basis of *Your* goodness – and I need it now."

It's remarkable that she recognizes and accepts both the challenge and the offer hidden within it?

For us accepting this special gift from Jesus is just like this Syrophoenician woman who is boldly something we all have at our disposal if only are persistent enough to ask.

Sometimes our approach to Jesus feels more like an accident, but Jesus knows us inside and out and gives us what we need whenever we need it – not always our timing though.

There's something else Mark wants us to see and think about...

Isaiah 35:4 says, 'The Messiah will come to save us, "with divine retribution."

He is talking about those who are blind and deaf to God's word – He will come to save us. He doesn't want to take over the world – he wants to come and

serve it.

On the cross, Jesus can identify with us totally. On the cross, the child of God was thrown away, cast away from the table without a crumb, so that those of us who are not children of God could be adopted and saved.

Put another way, the child had to become a dog so that we could become sons and daughters at the table.

And because Jesus identified like that with us, now we know why we can approach him.

The Son became a dog so that we dogs could be brought to the table; he became mute so that our tongues can be loosed to call him King and Father of all.

- ✎ Don't be too isolated to think you are beyond healing.
- ✎ Don't be too proud to accept what the Gospel says about your worthiness.
- ✎ Don't be too despondent to accept what the Gospel says about how loved you are.
- ✎ Be persistent in all that you ask of God, with faith to keep going.

Peggy Sear

Licensed Reader

Editor's Note: This is an edited version of a sermon preached in St Mary's Church on Sunday 5th September 2021.



Newsletter changes

To our readers:

Since the start of the pandemic, the Newsletter has been online only. Would you like to receive a printed copy, or do you know people who might want to receive one? Delivered personally to subscribers' letterboxes.

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and cannot deal with phone messages.

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Money raised from advertising will go to the Church's charities and to pay for the Church building maintenance.

Thank you, and looking forward to hearing from you.

Jill Hipson
Editor

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The donation box can be found on the table just inside the side door of the church.

The Coronavirus has changed our country and our church in ways we could have never anticipated.

**The Church of England, being present in every community, is well placed to lead and co-ordinate efforts to help those who find themselves in need.
2021 will be a time of adaptation and innovation for the church and we all need to be part of it.**

**“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat”
Matthew 25:35 NIV**



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What is it like to "hear" a hand?

You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be a small child,
In a school, in a room void of sound --
With a teacher who talks and talks and talks;
And then when she does come around to you,
She expects you to know what she's said?
You have to be deaf to understand.

Or the teacher thinks that to make you smart,
You must first learn how to talk with your voice;
So mumbo-jumbo with hands on your face
For hours and hours without patience or end,
Until out comes a faint resembling sound?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be curious,
To thirst for knowledge you can call your own,
With an inner desire that's set on fire --
And you ask a brother, sister, or friend
Who looks in answer and says, "Never Mind"?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What it is like in a corner to stand,
Though there's nothing you've done really wrong,
Other than try to make use of your hands
To a silent peer to communicate
A thought that comes to your mind all at once?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be shouted at
When one thinks that will help you to hear;
Or misunderstand the words of a friend
Who is trying to make a joke clear,
And you don't get the point because he's failed?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be laughed in the face
When you try to repeat what is said;
Just to make sure that you've understood,
And you find that the words were misread --
And you want to cry out, "Please help me, friend"?

You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to have to depend
Upon one who can hear to phone a friend;
Or place a call to a business firm
And be forced to share what's personal, and,
Then find that your message wasn't made clear?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be deaf and alone
In the company of those who can hear --
And you only guess as you go along,
For no one's there with a helping hand,
As you try to keep up with words and song?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like on the road of life
To meet with a stranger who opens his mouth --
And speaks out a line at a rapid pace;
And you can't understand the look in his face
Because it is new and you're lost in the race?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to comprehend
Some nimble fingers that paint the scene,
And make you smile and feel serene,
With the "spoken word" of the moving hand
That makes you part of the word at large?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to "hear" a hand?
Yes, you have to be deaf to understand.

(Written at 1971 by Willard J. Madsen, professor of journalism at Gallaudet University. This poem was translated into seven different languages and reprinted in publications, including DEAF HERITAGE, p. 380.)

Hello from **everyone at St Mary's Northchurch** and **we do hope that everyone is safe and well.** Please do remember that we are here to help and support our community. If you or anyone you know is experiencing difficulties during this time, please do get in touch. St Mary's Church runs one of the Northchurch Community Pantry venues and is open daily for donations or if you need help.

- ✂ Our Sunday morning service is at 10am every Sunday morning.
- ✂ Every evening at 10pm, we have a short Night Prayer (Compline) service on Facebook.

Look at our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/stmarynorthchurch> for these services and for more information.

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Editorial by email to the Editor, Jill Hipson Jill.hipson@live.co.uk.
Copy date is 25th of each month.



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No words to pray



A candle prayer

God,
Wherever you are,
I have no words to pray.
I am in the darkness,
Aching,
Lost,
In pain.

As I light my candle,
I reach out to you,
For my family and friends,
For the world around me,
For myself.
Give me strength
To face another day.
Shine your light into my
dark places
And help me to know
I am not alone.

Amen

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