

## 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Year A

What lengths would you go to to save the life of one of your children? What lengths have you gone to already?

Even though I am not a parent I still can get caught up in a sense of utter dread at the thought of having to run a son or daughter to the ER, especially if I didn't know what exactly was going on, or, if I did know, that I was convinced that addressing the need was way more than I could do on my own.

I'm sure it's the source of nightmares for more than one person present.

The Canaanite woman is confronted with a situation that would be beyond what any of us could confront. Her daughter is tormented by a demon. What that means exactly we can only imagine, but it seems pretty clear that no regular course of treatment will provide relief.

Jesus arrives on the scene. Going to the district of Tyre and Sidon, in what is now modern day Lebanon, might have been an attempt by him to get away for a moment from the work of his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There wouldn't be too many of them in a foreign land.

But his reputation precedes him. The woman has heard of him and has even arrived at a conclusion

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about his true identity. She doesn't call out, "Rabbi" or "Master" when she sees him. The titles she uses are nothing short of "Lord" and "Son of David."

I guess you could say she's pulling out the big guns. When it comes to demons, a person needs all the help she can get. And she sees in Jesus someone who has all the capability she needs to bring salvation to the situation.

The only problem is the ideology Jesus is laboring under. He understands his mission to be to reconstitute the tribes of Israel in a new covenant. He stands in the line of Moses and the prophets in doing so.

But he is also the "Son of David." His is a kingly ministry, too. That's the part of his identity that the Canaanite woman seizes upon. In Middle Eastern tradition it was the king who carried the responsibility to provide for the widows and orphans and foreigners in the land. It was his kingly duty.

She recognizes that the kingship of Jesus goes beyond the bounds of the land of Israel. She's willing to recognize in him a universal kingship that would apply even to people like herself who have no claim to the land of Abraham and his descendants.

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She makes her case with eloquence and the ring of truth. And Jesus can do nothing but acknowledge it.

It's true. What God has in mind for his creation is not limited to one, tiny, chosen people. They are instrumental as a light to the others, but show what God has in mind for all his creation.

It seems audacious, but what the Canaanite woman knows about God she can say even to God's Son.

She is so motivated on behalf of her daughter that taking no for an answer is not even an option, regardless of who it is that she is speaking to.

That ought to give us pause when we reach for "no" as our answer to the needs of those around us and to the needs of the world. How can we justify it? What rationalizations are we inclined to put into play?

Can we bring them out into the light of the Gospel? The truth of God's design that even Jesus had to recognize as the truth and bow to it?

It's one thing to recognize that our resources are limited, but it's another to maintain that no one else has any claim to them.

If we recognize the claim as valid, then it changes where we see the limits of what we have offer and

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fires our creativity to get the most out of what we have been given. We may even discover that our resources are richer and more capable than we realized.

The Canaanite woman does not only confront Jesus with the truth. She confronts us as well. We also are being called out to, not as “Lord” or “Son of David” but as “friend,” “neighbor,” fellow human,” “Christian.”