

*“Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs” (Mark 7:28).*

Words spoken by a mom whose daughter is sick and who has just been told by Jesus to go away. Yeah that’s right, to go away. No sugar coating here. In fact, Jesus calls both she and her daughter “dogs”; a cultural slur on a par with the “n-word” today.

In a recent sermon on this text, I made mention of Jesus’ racial slur, but I also spoke of Jesus’ mind being changed by a mom who wouldn’t take “no” for an answer; by a mom whose tenacious love for her daughter would stop at nothing for healing. Like the prodigal dad who sells the farm to throw a feast for his wayward son’s homecoming, this mom refuses to give up on grace. She persists, and so Jesus’ mind is changed. God’s mind has been changed before; just look at Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and Jonah to see that. In fact, Jesus’ mind is SO changed by this woman that from that point on in Mark’s gospel, Jesus goes to the most “gentil-ist” places ever: To Sidon and the Decapolis – you know, those mini Roman cities. It doesn’t get any more outsider than that. Clearly this story is illustrative of our call to radical inclusivity. But as I reflect further on this story, it seems I missed a point on Sunday.

Not only is this a narrative about breaking down barriers that divide, but it is also a story of abundance and this outsider’s recognition of it. It appears that this desperate mom who is at the end of her rope recognizes a certain abundance in the things that Jesus is up to. It’s almost as if she’s saying to the “insiders” who get to eat at the table, *“Go ahead eat all you want. But what if your table cannot contain all the food that Jesus brings? What if there are leftovers like the time he fed 5,000? What if there are so many leftovers that the excess food just starts spilling to the floor? If so, I’ll be there on my hands and knees gathering up the crumbs because even the crumbs will do the job”.*

Sometimes it takes an outsider, someone with “fresh” eyes to see the most obvious things we miss. Here, a desperate mom not only recognizes, but bears witness to the abundance of Jesus. No proper doctrine articulated; just a mom, her tenacious love for her daughter, and a whole lot of trust that Jesus is all about healing and abundance. Is there a lesson here for us? Sitting in a sanctuary which is emptier today than 20 years ago, is it possible that all we see are crumbs of scarcity when in reality there is abundance in our midst? Maybe we need this

desperate mom to show us what it means to cling to Jesus trusting that he will do what he says he came to do.

I don't know about you, but I'm going to look for her this Sunday, in fact I'm going to look for her every Sunday. I'm sure she's been here before and I know she'll be here again clinging to each and every crumb of good news that she hears; fiercely convinced that even a crumb will heal.

Peace and Love,

Pastor Doug