
The Gospel of Faith, Courage and Inclusion!

An Evensong meditation by the Rev. Salmoon Bashir
The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 18, Year B

An unnamed, gentile, foreign woman alone begging for her daughter's health. She was a mother. A mother who was begging Jesus for her daughter. The author of the Gospel of Mark specifically highlights the woman's ethnicity as a Gentile of Syrophenician origin (referred to as a Canaanite in Matthew 15), indicating that Jesus was in Gentile territory.

There are many interpretations of this story. But I think, more than anything this is a story of a deep faith and of a woman with an audacious courage to practice that faith. She integrated all of her faith, words and actions in this story with her courage. It is her faith-full talk that moves Jesus. She courageously speaks on behalf of her people to the "Lord," whom she trusts can transform her daughter's life.

I think of this unnamed Syrophenician woman as probably one of the very first Anglicans, who questioned even Jesus to the point that God changed God's mind. You see, in the Anglican tradition we have 3-legged stool – scripture, tradition, and reason. And this woman came and reasoned with Jesus and Jesus was compelled by her faith even to the point where Jesus healed her daughter.

Like every human being, Jesus who was God, changed his mind after seeing her courage and faith. This woman, an unnamed foreigner gentile woman, reminds me of Abraham and Moses, and Jacob. She stands in the likes of these Old Testament figures who argue well and argue well with God while keeping and standing on their ground of faith and courage. She was not afraid while reasoning like Abraham and Moses and like Jacob wrestling with God and insisting Him to heal her child, heal her daughter. [\[1\]](#)

The gospel of Mark tells us when this woman reasoned with Jesus' judgement about her, Jesus praised her word, her Logos, "For saying, for Speaking up" and told her, "You may go". Her word led her to action. Our words have power. Words help us into our faith journey like it did for this woman who wrestled and reasoned with Jesus while keeping her ground.

From faith and courage finally and most importantly this gospel story is a story of inclusion, this story is about broadening our table, those who believe will be called the sons and daughters of the highest, irrespective of their gender, race, nationality or any other mark. It is a story when Jesus expanded his ministry from being solely the Messiah of the chosen people to the Messiah for all. For Jews and gentiles, from east to west and south to north. Faith, courage and inclusion. Not exclusion but inclusion! Not hate but Love! Gospel of abundance for all... not only for Children of the chosen but for all. Jesus' ministry of inclusivity is made visible in this Gospel story.

This story represents a pivotal moment in salvation history. The barrier, the wall separating Jews and Gentiles crumbled as Christ embraced and welcomed this outsider—a foreign, unnamed woman—into His kingdom. No longer are we mere - dogs begging for crumbs; but we are cherished children, beloved invited to feast at the King's table. Jesus welcomes us to the table, embracing us as God's beloved children, from every tribe, language, and nation. Though even crumbs from the table would suffice for our healing and salvation, Jesus offers far more. He prepares an abundant, liberating, life-giving feast for everyone.

The door of grace stands wide open, welcoming all who come with the same courageous faith as this Syrophenician unnamed woman. A faith with courage. From now on the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of Jesus is officially on the move, and this woman became a true hero who through her faith and courage

made Jesus to open up his circle of salvation to all, to the wider world. And today to all of us.

Dear friends, this evening, my prayer for all of us is that may we, like this Syrophoenician woman have a courage and faith to reason and wrestle with God. And we like Jesus, be the witness of expansion of His kingdom through our words and actions. May we make the good news of Jesus Christ available to all, broadening our tables to include all Children of God. As Jesus said at the conclusion of gospel story when He healed another unnamed Gentile, "Ephphatha," meaning "be opened," may we also being open the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to those who haven't heard the good news but only weeping and wailing.

Like Jesus said, *ephphatha*, "be opened", like Syrophoenician woman, you are welcome to feast at the King's table! The Gospel of faith, courage and inclusion. Amen!

[\[1\]](#) Some Research from Salt Project