

Mark 7:24-37      16th Sunday after Pentecost      September 7, 1997

*24From there he 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 Syrophenician 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."*

I got a call this week from a Missouri Synod Lutheran Pastor in the Cleveland area. He'd been by a year ago to see me, telling me all about the herbs he was selling. This time he wanted to set up a free seminar here to introduce you to the wonderful benefits of these extraordinary herbs. I declined the offer.

A woman talked with me. Her friend is a healer, wants to touch and heal her. She declined.

She told me about water from Medjugorje, how her husband had tried it and been healed of troublesome skin problem. I wondered.

Dial a number and someone will tell you your fortune.

Consult the cards and your future will be revealed.

Buy new golf clubs, they will straighten out your slice.

Take this powder and your weight problem will be solved.

Buy a lottery ticket and all your dreams will come true.

Or the right mutual fund.

Books on souls, or angels, the power of crystals.

Have you ever wondered, "Am I missing out on something here? Is there healing for me at a cancer clinic in Mexico? Is there peace of mind as near as some new meditation?"

I remember a couple of years ago being awakened by the sound of tinkling bells at 2am. I was in the dorm at the synod assembly at Kent State. Since I knew the person in the room next to me the next morning I asked. I learned he was practicing a form of eastern meditation. Recently I asked him about it, he had given it up.

There is a lot of searching going on.

*From there he set out and went to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there.*

Jesus is the one who went to Tyre. On a map Galilee is over here and Tyre is way up there, a long way away, far from all the people who worshipped the God of Israel. Jesus went far from the scribes and Pharisees who were watching for him to slip. Jesus went far from the crowds hungry for bread, and healing. Was he also far from his disciples? There is no indication he took them along on this journey.

*He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there.*

Mark tells us: *Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet.*

She honored him (worshipped him?). She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. Jesus could not escape from people needing help - the whole world reaching out to touch him, finding him even in a house far from home.

Maybe he could get rid of her so no more would follow: *He 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."*

Gentiles - dogs - her daughter was not one of the children of Israel.

*But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."*

Even crumbs from Jesus would bring healing, that was her faith.

*He said to her, "For saying that you may go, the demon has left your daughter."*

And so it had, she returned home to find her daughter resting at peace.

She had everything she wanted from Jesus. But did she have everything God wanted from her, for her.

What if the herbs work and you feel better, the cancer goes into remission, you get more money than you have ever had? What if you know what will happen to you tomorrow, or have an out of body death experience, or even speak in tongues?

Paul wrote, “Though I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but have not love I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. Though I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love I gain nothing.”

We think that life will be found in alleviating sickness or pain or anguish. Jesus did that for people wherever he went. But he wanted more for the people, more for you. Jesus wanted all to know not simply his healing touch, but more profoundly his love.

For Jesus love for you is the pouring out of his life for you, his going to the cross for you, his never abandoning you even when you should prove unfaithful.

If cancer is cured today and all the money needs taken care of today a tomorrow is coming when sickness will come again, a grave is coming where money will buy absolutely nothing. But in Jesus Christ is love and life that will not be limited, not even by death. We may want to touch only Jesus garment and be healed and go away to live as we always have, but Jesus will only be content when we taste his very self and his love flows out from us every day. Jesus will not be content until he is no longer simply a way to fix our problems but he is our life and our hope and our Lord.

Your life, and your hope, and your Lord.

For everything will pass away, health and wealth, family and knowledge, possessions and appearance, but Jesus will be yours forever.

And so we baptize. And teach our children so that Jesus might be theirs and they his. Forever. Amen.