

Mark 7: 24-30

24 From 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,²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet.²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.²⁷ 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.'²⁸ But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'²⁹ Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.'³⁰ So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Commentary: Here we have one of those few but special instances in the gospels where Jesus encounters non-Jews (gentiles), and finds in them, ironically, a deeper grasp of faith than in his own people. This woman is one such person. She takes the risk of leaping over race, culture, religion and gender, to plead with Jesus on behalf of her afflicted daughter. She takes the risk of being rejected even after paying full homage to one whom she clearly believes has the power to make her daughter well. Jesus' initial answer to her plea seems a little puzzling. Is he testing her, playing with her, or is he genuinely asserting his mission first to his own people? Whatever the case, this woman does not respect external boundaries when it comes to the life and health of her own flesh and blood. She will take whatever she can get. Jesus is moved. He grants her request on the basis of her tenacious faith in his power.

What are we willing to do for the sake of those we love? What are we willing to change for the sake of saving our planet? What are we willing to put up with in terms of restrictions and isolation in order to heal as a society? What are we driven to do to show our love to communities in Nova Scotia grieving a terrible and cruel loss? Faith is not just an intellectual thing. Faith and love are deeply connected. When we love deeply and are prepared to act on that love, faith is the trust that such action out of love can make a difference. The woman in our story is prepared to do anything for her daughter's healing. She believes in Jesus in a powerful way. Jesus is moved and engaged by such faith. What about you and me?

Prayer: Find me, O God... find me and fill me with fresh energy of your love, a love that cares for others and for our world... And may new faith rise up in me, faith that you in me can be part of the way you want to bless and heal our world, which includes me... Amen.