

Lent Day 21
Friday March 4, 2016

Reading: Mark 7.24-30

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

“Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Reflection

One of the results of modernity, which wasn’t present in earlier times, was life becoming compartmentalized. Life was life; you worked, you ate, you married, you lived. Then life became segmented. You had a home life, you went to work, etc. It may not seem like a big distinction on paper, but it was a fairly important shift in the way we think and it gave rise to two other compartments: public and private. Who you are in private doesn’t necessarily match who you are in public.

In the passage we are dealing with two ancient compartments: Jews and Gentiles (non-Jew). Jesus is the Jewish Messiah with a clear agenda to minister to the Jewish people. So, when a Gentile comes to him and asks for her daughter to be freed from impure spirits, Jesus responds that it is not right to take the bread (Jesus’ kingdom work) from the children (Israel) and throw it to the dogs (common Jewish destination for Gentiles). In short, he says “I’m here to call and save Israel.”

However, Jesus ends up healing the daughter, why? Many think it’s because of her clever speech. Her speech is clever, but Jesus is responding to understanding. She understands that there is a necessary relationship between Jews and Gentiles; the dogs benefit from the children being fed. She (whether she knows it or not) is pointing to Israel’s vocation to be a blessing to the nations. That’s why Jesus heals her daughter, because she’s right all of creation is meant to share in the blessing of Israel.

When we live in our compartmentalized way — sacred/secular or public/private — we believe that we can live in two different ways. I can be one way when I’m around church people and another way around work. We believe they are not related. However, one of the recoveries of postmodernity is a renewed understanding of relational systems. That our lives aren’t really segmented. Affecting one part affects the whole. Our salvation and sanctification (process of becoming holy) is meant to touch everything, not just part. Who we are at work or home should be a result of the transformation of the Spirit in our lives.

Prayer

Lord and God who formed us from the earth, heal us and make us whole. Pull together the segmented pieces of our lives and reform us into the image of your son Jesus. Amen.