

[Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23](#)

[Psalm 125](#)

[Mark 7:24-37](#)

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*God is love, and love enfolds us, All the world in one embrace;
With unfailing grasp God holds us, every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking under sorrow's rod,
then we find that self same aching deep with in the heart of God.*

We live in a busy and full world.

It's September, the streets are full of students, of people visiting, of things to do. Our fall routines have returned and at the same time it is a time to reflect on why are our schedules so full? What have we filled our days with?

Last week we celebrated baptisms, we re-remembered the words of Song of Solomon of God's deep love for each of us and call for transformation in our lives, we shared in the water of baptism and our own baptismal covenants.

I am reminded of how water can transform, slowly and quickly. The long transforming power of water being a contributing factor of creating the Grand Canyon in the past 5-6million years ago, creating a long slow beauty.¹ Weaving it's way creating a chasm that mystifies us still today reminding us of long slow transformation.

Having lived in Florida for eleven years, Labor Day held a special space in my ordained life. In my first Labor Day in Tallahassee, we were hit by a category 1 hurricane. 45minutes inland, Tallahassee rarely saw actual hurricanes, rather they typically got rain and winds. But that year, the entire city was hit hard. Old Oaks lost limbs, power went out and we came out of our homes in the humid aftermath to assess and to recover.

Tears were shed over lost beloved trees, the needs of loved ones, and then there were the simple joys of cooking everything in our freezer on the grill and inviting the neighbors over to feast. Confronted by lack of electricity, we created community on our lawns and spent the days assisting others. Communities coming together. Unexpected things from unexpected places.

As we settle into our fall program year, we have 11 weeks until Advent begins and in those 11 weeks we will walk slowly, chronologically through the Gospel of Mark. We will take our time, as much as Mark allows us (since everything moves quickly in

this gospel), letting the words one after another sink in and transform us. A longer slower progression, letting the words wash over us. Today we hear of healings which occur immediately after last week's gospel of speaking about what should be found in the heart.

And today we hear of the hearts' desire, to continue that theme.

In Two stories.

We hear of hearts yearning for re-connecting, re-membering into the community.

Two stories that speak of healing that is both long needed through winding journeys and also swift in transformation.

Stories of faith from the most unexpected places and spaces.

Today we hear of the Syrophoenician woman. We are in the region of Tyre and we can credibly believe that Jesus was tired. He has been teaching healing and he has gone into a home because he wanted to be away from the crowds. Tyre is important to note because it is in a region of the Greeks, the gentiles, the "other." This is not his home turf. He is the unexpected in this space.

Amidst the "other," he seeks to be alone.

To Pause.

Instead of rest, he receives an uninvited, unexpected woman in need.

Her arrival is not like the faith filled Jewish hemorrhagic woman who two chapters previously in Mark who reaches out for her own healing, grasping the corner of Jesus' garment in the midst of a crowd. NO, this woman today strides right into the home and demands healing for her daughter.

She demands change, swift and immediate. Much more like a hurricane than the Colorado river, she is swift.

She could be seen as the Patron Saint of demanding change. ²

She won't back down.

She meets Jesus where he is and wrestles with Jesus word for word. For every exclusionary term she embodies (not Jewish, a woman, not of the right space or time) she counters with an opportunity to think bigger, to expand and grow, to live more abundantly.

For Change. The encounter is not comfortable. Jesus' words are not kind.

She does not back down.

It's amusing to think for a minute of the 5 weeks of "living bread" gospels and now our gospel is arguing about crumbs--- Crumbs: hard to get rid of, even these small morsels are important.

Remember how many baskets those crumbs filled in that feeding of the 5,000?

Swift and unexpected demands for change.

And there is change.

The woman's daughter is healed by Jesus from a distance by the request of her mother, demons- those defiling the daughter from within are released and this young girl, beloved daughter, is released from her suffering.

Change that would affect her whole life to continue.

The thing about our Gospel today is that is not JUST about encountering the Syrophenician woman, rather, Jesus continues from Tyre back to Galilee through Sidon... and while we are being given a geography lesson here (this route is akin to going to Saugus to get to Dorchester- Jesus did not always go the shortest route, by the way- a winding road)

We find Jesus healing a deaf man that was brought to him. And Jesus takes him aside, touches him with the most mundane of resources, his own spit.

Water, touch and the words "Be Opened."

And indeed- healing is given.

Similar to those healed in Chapter 5 of this gospel we have juxtapositions of gender, location, distance and proximity. Each detail is significant. Again, we see the similarities, healing given to both individuals because of their receptivity.

Healing given within community.

Change in the unexpected and for the long term.

Change demanded.

IN aggressive and passive ways.

Where do we find ourselves when change is demanded of us in unexpected ways?

Where do we look back and see that we, too have been formed slowly, changed in the space that we have been within?

Soon, we will continue our worship- not only with gathering around this table to be fed with the spiritual nourishment of our Savior's body and blood. We will then go downstairs and put together meals for those in our community- that they too, might be fed. Boxes of ingredients measured, poured and repackaged to be sent out to those who are hungry.

It's a process downstairs, a weaving pathway to accomplish the work to be done.

And during that atypical space you will be transformed (hairnets and gloves are amazing--they give everyone a new identity) and we will work shoulder to shoulder, beside a new neighbor to accomplish this task.

Each person with a story and a part of this community.

Each with a role to accomplish the task.

There is a space for you at that table, too. Each of you.

And while our Meal packing event today will not solve all of the hunger in the city of Boston, the impact will matter to those who receive the meals.

And we will continue to strive to listen to the voices that demand to be heard.

With a lot of grace and striving to meet each other just where we find ourselves.

As Jesus commands, "Be Opened" to hear and see

In the familiar and in the new spaces we find ourselves.

In the fullness and stillness of our worlds.

Using the simplest of things that we have around us, water, presence, crumbs and voice.

The winds and water of this world might swirl around us,
they also change and transforms us to see God in our midst.
God, who can take our arguments, our demands, and our needs.
God who is both living bread and in the crumbs.
God who takes water and restores both hearing and sight.

In the midst of the swirl and tempest, the fullness of this fall, we,
too, become shaped into the beloved community of God together.

Make space to listen, to hear, and to be transformed.
Amen.

¹ While Tectonic Plates also contributed, river erosion is very much a part of the story, too. <https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/nature/grca-geology.htm#:~:text=Uplift%20of%20the%20Colorado%20Plateau,Colorado%20Plateau%20occurred%20is%20puzzling.>

²I love Padraig O'Tuama's reflection on this woman in his commentary here: <https://www.spiritualityofconflict.com/readings/327/24th-sunday-in-ordinary-time>