

Sermon for 16th August 2020 – Year A – Trinity 10 – Matthew 15:21 – 28

My name is Justa. I am a Canaanite woman. I am a daughter, a wife, but most of all, I am a mother. I have a daughter but she is very ill. My daughter has been ill for some time now and nobody has been able to heal her.

I live with my family in the region of Phoenicia. I am desperate for my daughter to be healed. I had heard stories about this man called Jesus who had healed many people in Gennesaret (Matthew 14:34-36). He is a Jew and some rumours say that some Jewish people believed him to be their Messiah. Jews and Canaanites don't mix, I know that but my daughter is so ill that I am willing to try anything to get her healed.

I cannot believe my luck, when I heard that this Jesus was on his way to our region. I didn't really know what I was going to do but as soon as I heard the news, I left my home.

Soon after, I saw a group of travellers. They were all men. They didn't have much with them. As they came closer, I noticed they were busy talking about something, except a man in the middle of them. He seemed to be in his own deep thoughts. Something in this man made me realise that this must be the Jesus – the healer – which those rumours were about.

Without even thinking what I was going to do or say, I heard myself shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." I so wished that Jesus would look at me and say something, but he didn't. I was like air to him.

Maybe I have to shout louder, I thought, and so I did. Still this Jesus didn't say a thing, but now his friends became angry and wanted Jesus sent me away. Their angry demands woke Jesus from his deep thoughts and he stopped walking. I was almost a front of him now, only few steps away. Now Jesus looked at me and said, **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."**

Hearing his words my heart sank. His not going to help me? But my daughter is so ill. I don't want to lose her. She needs help and I can feel in my heart that the only person who can help her is the man standing front of me. – No! I'm not giving up so easily. And with that thought, I took a step forward and knelt before this man saying, "Lord, help me."

This time he didn't dismiss me but said instead, **"It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."** As soon as I heard him say these words, I realised that it was because I was as a foreigner, a Canaanite woman. - I knew I was breaking all possible rules of behaviour but my daughter's future depended on this man's willingness to help her. I knew he could do it if he wanted to. And somewhere, deep inside me, a fighting fire was kindled and I said back, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table."

As I said that, I saw a stunned surprise in Jesus' face. There was a long pause as if he was trying to figure out what to say. 'Please, please, please, you can help my daughter if you want', was my only thought whilst I stayed kneeling in front of Jesus. After a while, what felt like an eternity, Jesus said, **"Woman, great is your faith! Let I be done for you as you wish."**

I couldn't believe it! I stood up and began to run home. All I could think was that I needed to see if what Jesus had promised really would be true. When I reached my village, my husband came running towards me and shouting how a miracle had happened. Our daughter was well again. I ran in and saw my daughter sitting on the bed, freed from her ailment. I told my husband what I had done and we praised God and this Jesus – the healer, showing us, Canaanites, such grace.

My name is Justa and I am a mother whose daughter was healed by Jesus. And this is my story.

But let me ask you, what weighs you down? What makes you feel defeated? What are those things in your life that seem to take all your energy? Is something controlling you and you just can't beat it? Are you feeling outsider? Are you looking at your future and don't see anything but a huge question mark? Do you need healing? Do know someone who needs healing?

After what happened to me and my family, I wonder if you could – instead of giving up, even if you feel that Jesus isn't hearing your prayers, still have faith and trust he is there for you.

I know the words Jesus spoke to me were harsh. Yet somehow what I said, changed his mind and his attitude towards "others like us". I think something changed on that day how Jesus saw us. Something changed in his work too. I heard how after meeting me, Jesus went and healed great crowds, not only Jews but anyone who was brought to him (Matthew 15:29-32).

Let this encourage us all today. We can always be sure of God's presence. Yet, we have to be willing to take the risk of faith, so

that we can receive wholeness, comfort, and courage in whatever our suffering or troubles are.

God wants us to have rest and refreshment... He wants to renew life for us too.

Amen.