

WELCOME

Grace and Peace be with you in the name of our Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

Welcome to worship, friends.

Wherever you are joining us from today, we are glad you are here.

My name is Rev. Yadi Martínez-Reyna, and I am one of the pastors in this community.

Anyone you see with a “Minister” tag is an ordained UCC minister in real life.

Today we gather around a story of a woman who refused to be ignored, a mother who cried out for mercy,
and a Jesus who listened, changed, and made room at the table.

So bring your whole self today: your questions, your weariness, your stubborn hope, and your need for mercy.

May this time remind us that even when the world offers crumbs, the Holy One is still widening the table.

On this Sunday, I rejoice to be the one to welcome you to worship.

This is First United Church of Christ and Conference Center Second Life, a real UCC church with full standing in the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ.

A place that welcomes you and wants you to know that:

No matter who you are,
or where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here.

Just a quick reminder that our music will be on the media viewer, so please be sure your voice and media are turned on.

If you’re not sure how to do that, just let someone know and we’ll gladly help.

There will also be a link in Nearby Chat so you can
watch in your browser if the viewer isn’t working for you.

As a real UCC congregation, we help support the wider church in prayer and in finances.

We’re deeply grateful for any offering you feel led to share.

You can use the donation bowl next to the red book in the back or visit our website, firstuccsl.org.

And now friends, let us open our hearts to the Spirit’s movement among us as we worship together.

INVOCATION

Come Holy Spirit and wherever our friends and family are listening too may your

spirit touch them,
may your presence be felt and your peace that surpasses all understanding be with us
all.

Thank you Holy one for another Sunday together, may all glory and honor be yours in
Jesus name.

Amen

Gathering Song -

Alicia Keys - Superwoman (Official Video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AphKUK8twg&list=RD-AphKUK8twg&start_radio=1

SCRIPTURES

Today's reading comes from the gospel of Matthew 15:21-28 NRSV

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting,
"Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

But he did not answer her at all.

And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps
shouting after us."

He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters
table."

Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you
wish."

And her daughter was healed from that moment.

The Word of God for the People of God
Thanks be to God

SERMON - A Crumb Will Do

Have you ever heard the expression, "Be more like Jesus"?

Or, "I want to be more like Jesus"?

I believe that when people say this, they are usually referring to the divine side of Jesus.

You know, the one who does not get mad, or tired, or bored, or upset.

The one who is always gracious with words and actions.

The chill Jesus.

The less radical Jesus.

The more tame Jesus.

The perfect deity.

But today, Scripture shows us a more human side of Jesus, one that maybe we do not always want to draw attention to.

As a creative designer and someone who is marketing-aware in today's cancel culture, I can tell you: Jesus would have been canceled.

Look at these readings with me closely.

A Canaanite woman begs for help.

Was she on her knees?

Was she throwing herself at him?

Was she shouting, trying to get through the crowd?

"Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!"

And what did Jesus do?

He walked away.

He did not even acknowledge her.

That is so annoying.

Jesus literally walks away.

And not only that, the disciples come alongside him and say, "She is annoying. Send her away."

Have you ever seen that happen?

Have you ever watched someone ask for help and get dismissed?

Have you ever been the one dismissed?

Completely ignored?

Or worse, ridiculed?

I don't know about you, but it takes a whole lot out of me to ask for help.

I am the worst at fund raising or asking people for what I need.

I would rather figure it out myself, duct tape it together, pray over it, and hope nobody notices.

But when it comes to my fur babies, my kids, or the teens I walk alongside, I will swallow my pride and ask.

When I realized our summer camp might not happen because my financial situation had changed, I did not hesitate.

I started working the emails, making the phone calls, and hitting up all my friends to help make camp possible for our queer youth.

Because when someone you love is hurting, there is nothing that we will not find relief.

So I wonder how much more I would do if one of my kids was being tormented by an illness, or by something even worse—something this woman called a demon.

That is why this Canaanite woman, despite being overlooked, dismissed, and ignored, was not going to stop.

This was her daughter who was tormented.

And for her daughter, she would go find the man doing miracles.

She would beg.

She would insist.

Even after being dismissed.

Even after being ignored.

Dignity, be damned.

This woman is willing to risk embarrassment and social dignity for her daughter.

Can you relate?

Yet human Jesus, beyond dismissing and ignoring her, says, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

Did he just call her a dog?

I mean really, did he not just call her a dog?

This is messy Jesus.

This is like that cousin at a party you don't want to introduce to friends, the one who might get too drunk, to racist, who is messy.

That is what Jesus sounds like right now.

A few days ago, I was having lunch with a colleague in the nonprofit world, and she was sharing her testimony.

She was telling me how she faced a very difficult time in her life, where everything she was doing was not working out, her non profit had just been established and it was going belly up even before it opened its doors.

And one night, out of desperation, she said she got on her knees and told God, "Will you just throw me a freaking bone?"

The moment she said that, I could not help but think of the Canaanite woman. I could not help but realize how many times we are at a point of prayer, discernment, pure desperation, or realization that we are at our wits' end, and we yell, "Have mercy on me!"

Throw me a bone!

Even then, Jesus snubs her and says, "I came for the people of Israel."

So who was this Canaanite woman that Jesus was not even giving the time of day?

Well, for starters, she was coming from a pagan region, far from the Jewish people.

But notice the shift in tone that Jesus takes when this woman clarifies some things.

One: her persuasion, perseverance, and ability to withstand anything for her daughter is powerful.

Two: she has no problem calling Jesus out, saying, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

So perhaps, "Don't throw me a bone. Just a crumb will do. Give me something for my daughter."

And how many times, friends, do we try to barter with the Holy One?

"Please, just give me something. Look, I will... if you..."

Insert promise here.

Insert request here.

Jesus, in his humanity, had prejudice.

Jean Vanier, in the book *Becoming Human*, said, “The lifelong journey of all humans involves growth in freedom, an opening up of our hearts to others, stepping out from behind the walls of our fears and prejudice and discovering our common humanity.”

Perhaps this is what makes people uncomfortable about this Jesus: he changed his mind.

He walked away from someone in need and rediscovered that all who are in need are welcome at the table.

Perhaps his region, his background, and his Jewish cultural upbringing played a part.

And perhaps it was then that the divine side clicked and said, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”

And her daughter was healed from that moment.

A very important thing about the Gospel, friends, is hope.

Hope unrealized.

The willpower of your humanity that is boosted by hope.

Because sometimes hope looks like refusing to leave the table, even when someone tells you there are only crumbs left.

Sometimes faith looks like speaking up after being ignored.

Sometimes courage sounds like yelling, following and not giving up yelling after the messiah, “Have mercy on me.”

And sometimes the miracle begins when someone who has been pushed away says, “Even the crumbs are enough for me to believe that my child still deserves healing.”

That is the Gospel messing with us again.

That is Jesus being confronted with another person’s humanity.

That is a mother refusing to let rejection have the final word.

So here is the action item for this week:

Notice who is being dismissed.

Notice who is crying out for mercy and being told to be quiet.

Notice who is being asked to survive on crumbs while others sit comfortably at the table.

And then choose one way to respond.

Listen to someone you would normally overlook.

Advocate for someone being ignored.

Share a resource.

Make room at the table.

Speak up when someone is being pushed aside or even called annoying.

And maybe even ask yourself:

Where do I need to change my mind?

Where have I been too comfortable with someone else getting crumbs?

Where is the Holy One inviting me to see another person's humanity more clearly?

Because the Gospel does not call us to guard the table.

The Gospel calls us to widen it.

And sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is listen when someone from the margins says,

"Even the crumbs are enough for me to believe ..."

That, friends, is hope.

May you be just as stubborn when your seeking hope and relief.

Amen.

PRAYER PREPARATION

We have come to the time where we come together in prayer.

Let us give thanks for the gift of this day
and pray for the life of the world.

If you have a prayer of joy or concern that you wish to lift to God, and have supported by the energy of those gathered here, we invite you to share.

As this song plays, in the silence of our hearts or type your request in the nearby chat.

Crowder - Come As You Are (Music Video)

<https://youtu.be/r2zhf2mqEMI?si=B9T5IFsXSk30WdeV>

COMMUNITY PRAYER

If there was a prayer inside of you that you couldn't quite get out, it's ok.

Because the Psalmist tells us that God knows what we are going to say before the words can even form on our tongues.

And so we know.

We know that God has heard our prayers.

Those spoken out loud, those typed into SL chat, and those spoken only in the silence of our hearts.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Holy One,

Meet us at the table with mercy.

Hear the cries of those who have been ignored, dismissed, or pushed aside. Give us courage to speak up, humility to listen, and compassion to make room for one another.

May our faith be persistent, our hope have teeth, and our love widen the table.

Amen.

Blessing for the Journey

Go now with persistent faith and stubborn hope.

May the Holy One hear you when you cry out,
strengthen you when you are dismissed,
and give you courage to make room for others at the table.

May your love be bold,
your mercy be wide,
and your hope never waiver.

Go in peace, go in justice, go in love.

Amen.

Music for the Journey

Imagine Dragons - On Top Of The World (Official Music Video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5tWYmIOWGk&list=RDw5tWYmIOWGk&start_radio=1