

Expect a Miracle!

Mark 7:24-37

- INTRO:

The Good News of Jesus Christ is good news for the desperate. Jesus reached out to desperate people living on the outside. He showed us God's compassion for those in need. As the Church, we need to be reminded over and over again of the empowering, surprising, miraculous love of God in Christ. We need to expect a miracle when and where a miracle is needed.

- ME:

I experienced a bit of a miracle on Labor Day. I was at Kroger and returning to my car to head home. I was almost across the trafficked area safely when I noticed this Honda mini-van heading straight for me!! If I had not dropped my groceries and jumped to the ground, ***this lady would have hit me! It was a miracle because I am not always that attentive or responsive!***

- YOU

Do you look both ways before you cross the street? How about before you pull out in your car? Please start looking both ways if you do not! Now is the time to be attentive and responsive as we do to Mark's Gospel. Let's

listen to God in a few moments of silence, then as he speaks in surprising ways in Mark 7.

Let's pray together first...beginning with silence...

- GOD:
- *Mark 7:24–37 (NRSV): 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. 31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond*

measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

- WE:

There are 2 stories in this text that both happen in Gentile territory. Beyond the border of Israel into the margin or known and accepted society. Here Jesus is encountered by a Gentile woman and her sick daughter. The other story is an exorcism, a miracle story. Jesus simply spoke and this daughter was healed. The crowd is amazed that Jesus performed a wonderful healing and a miracle for a Gentile woman.

Did you notice how Jesus seemed hesitant to veer from his mission to Israel? Yeah, me too! He definitely used “**outsider**” language to describe her and her people. Some say he was just quoting a prophet, **but it was definitely not seeker sensitive language to call her a dog!** But she didn’t give up, **did she?** She is a model outsider, a person from the margins who pushes her way into Jesus’ vision and is noticed by him and is blessed by him for doing so.

Some suggest the story is probably meant to justify the successful mission to the Gentiles by the early Church. This effort is based on the example of Jesus in going outside of Israel to deliver God’s mercy and grace. He reminds us to be attentive to the persistent pain of desperate people who push their way in and are blessed by Jesus. The bump into Jesus and they expect a miracle.

Many years ago there was a televangelist, a “**faith healer**,” with a popular television show. There was music and a short sermon, but it all built up to the focus of the show; his “**expect a miracle time**.” People would file down to the front on crutches, pulling oxygen tanks, pushed in wheelchairs. The choir kept singing, the evangelist would reach out to each one of these people in turn. He would press on their forehead, shouting things like, “**Come out of her, demon!**” Or “**In the name of Christ, I command you to be healed!**”

It was entertaining! Probably more **entertaining** than **worshipful**. It was also theologically questionable and *boy ... was it manipulative!*

Demand that you be healed . . . and you will be healed?

Is this what the Gospel is all about?

This is showbiz faith **preying** on the ignorance of simple people.

Simple faith is not ignorant, but **manipulation** is not **faithful**. People who served in World War II insist that *there are no atheists in foxholes!* This is a tribute to the reality and the vibrancy of faith in God during a time of war. When you are desperate as bullets fly overhead close by, ***it is easier to believe in God!*** And so, *there are not atheists in foxholes!*

Is foxhole-motivated belief in God a credit to God? Who wouldn't turn to God when feeling vulnerable to bullets? It would be a better compli-

ment to God to say there are no atheists by the **pool** or at the **country club** or behind the **wheel!** In times when life is going well, rather than in times of desperation.

In the Gospel today we find one whose life is not going well. **She is in despair and reaches out to Jesus for what? A miracle!** It shows us that there is just something about Jesus that attracts desperate people. And we see that Jesus had a way of loving desperate people.

In Mark Jesus has a tough time getting people to listen to him , to follow him down his narrow way. This morning, *not so much!* This woman **pushes** her way into the house where Jesus was staying ad **demands** to be a part of what Jesus has.

She is desperate. Her daughter is ill. Parents drop everything when there child needs them. **Is her attention any great compliment to Jesus?**

She was a Gentile and probably did not know anything bout what Jesus was teaching. She doesn't know why he does the tings she has heard that he does. **Is it right for he to expect a miracle from a preacher she has probably never heard preach?**

This passage from mark shows that is may be true that a lot of people come to Jesus like this. And you know what, it's okay. **Is this at all like the way you found Jesus? Can you even remember what first brought you**

t Jesus? If not that's okay. It was probably something just like this. **Did she expect a miracle?** Doesn't matter, *she got one!*

Jesus called her a dog as he seems to brush her off. But remember, his mission is to the lost sheep of Israel. *They are enough of a job to do that he does not need to add more to his agenda!* Just ask anyone in the Tuesday morning Bible study. They have been studying Jeremiah. *Jeremiah shows that the nation of Israel was enough work in and of itself!*

Did Israel deserve to expect the miracle of God pursuing them with love and grace and forgiveness over and over and over and...?

Do we deserve God's relentless pursuit of us with his love and his grace and his each?

Israel was an outsider chosen by God. We were outsiders offered grace in Jesus Christ. Before this story is over in Mark, this woman is received by Jesus even though she is an outsider. There are so many reasons why Jesus could have dropped the mic and walked away from her after calling her a dog. But her need is desperate . . . and so is Jesus' love.

She needs a miracle and she needs it badly!

And a miracle is just what she got. Jesus reaches **out** and **over** all the reasons he shouldn't and heals her little girl.

There is something to be said for people who know that rejection is coming but they ask anyway. They know they will probably be rejected, but they

try anyhow because their need is too great. Someone who pushes their way into God's presence and demands that God be all that God can be.

They expect a miracle!

A savior who saves the desperate. A savior who reaches *out* and *over* all the reasons we don't deserve his attention and saves us anyway.

It is fun to watch as Jesus reaches out to the **desperate** with the **divine, desperate** love that challenges our boundaries and makes us glad that Jesus, in his love, has reached out each of us.

- THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

Expect a miracle, because you have already experienced the miracle of God's grace and love.

- YOU:

Do you expect a miracle? If not, **how will you work on that?** If you open your eyes you may just see miracles every day. If you expect a miracle,

- CLOSE:

Remember that lady that almost hit me? She did stop and apologize.

She said she had not seen me . . . Let that sink in soft a minute . . . I rather excitedly wondered out loud with her how that was possible, since I am a rather big guy. The truth is that she just did not look. I realized then, even with my adrenaline pumping rather quickly, that I make mistakes while driving too. As I gather my groceries and headed to my car a woman

in a Gold Lexus SUV stopped and asked if I was ok. The woman in the van had pulled out in front of her and she saw the whole thing. She asked if I wanted that woman's license plate number. She did not hit me and I felt alright despite the abrasions on my knees and elbow. She told me she was Nurse and was worried and that is why she wrote the number down and stopped to see if I was okay. I told her briefly about my previous experience with a car 34 years ago. ***I take it a little personally when someone almost hits me with a car again!*** But she did not hit me and she did stop to apologize. I have learned over 34 years to look both ways better. I sure hope this driver has learned this too from this experience. Yep, I'm expecting a miracle...

Let's pray together...