

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (YEAR B) Sunday 8 September
2024

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

DOGS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Welcoming the Gentiles (Mark 7: 24-37)

Mark's Gospel portrays Jesus conducting his ministry first among the Jewish people and then among the Gentiles. This passage marks the transition to the Gentile territory. Jesus' conversation with the Gentile women explores the significance of transition. In this conversation the children stand for the Jewish people and the dogs stand for the Gentiles. Jesus' view is that the Jewish people need to be fed first, but the turn of the Gentiles has now arrived. The Gentiles also deserve to be treated as God's children.

Our image to stimulate reflection on Jesus' conversation with the Syrophenician woman is *dogs*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Mark 7: 25-28; for reflection throughout the week)

A woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit
immediately heard about Jesus,
and she came and bowed down at his feet.
Now the woman was a Gentile,
of Syrophenician origin.
She begged Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter.
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.'
But she answered him,
'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
your love is for all people.
Teach us to share your love with all,
that your reign may reach
to the ends of the world;
for you are our God.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Mark 7: 24-37

The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith

From there Jesus 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, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 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.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Jesus Cures a Deaf Man

Then Jesus returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Mark 7: 24-37)

Begin exploring Mark's teaching about Jesus reaching out to the Syrophenician woman and then to the deaf man by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is the significance of Mark identifying the woman as a Gentile and as Syrophenician by race?
- How do you interpret the conversation about dogs?
- What do you make of the way Jesus touched the deaf man's tongue?
- What do you make of Mark recording the Aramaic word *ephphatha*?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore Matthew's account of the Gentile woman.

- Matthew 15: 21-28

Explore Mark's refrain not to tell of the healing.

- Mark 5: 43
- Mark 9: 9

Explore references to dogs in the Old Testament.

- 1 Samuel 17: 41-43
- 1 Kings 21: 24
- Psalm 22: 16-20
- Psalm 59: 6, 14

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Mark's teaching about Jesus reaching out to the Syrophenician woman by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Why did Jesus call the woman a dog?
- Dog as insult
- Bert, his dog, our God

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Mark's teaching about Jesus reaching out to the Syrophenician woman is *dogs*. Draw on your own experience of dogs. For example:

- Have you had good experiences of dogs?
- Have you had bad experiences of dogs?
- Have you experience of dogs offering support, help, and healing?

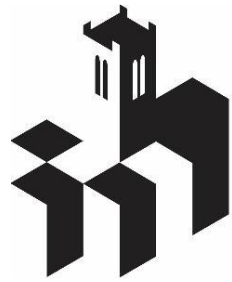
What have you learned about dogs?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Mark's teaching about Jesus reaching out to the Syrophenician woman or by the image of dogs.

- Make a poster depicting Jesus' encounter with the Syrophenician woman.
- Make a collage of pictures of dogs engaging with people.
- Create a mural showing different breeds of dogs.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on Jesus reaching out to the Syrophenician woman or on the image of dogs.

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**Liverpool
Cathedral**

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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