

WELCOME 9th May 2021 – 6 Easter '21 B

Mark 7:24-30

Welcome! **HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!** It's great to be together. As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources for you to use over the course of the week. As God leads you into the fullness of His word/work in your life he will then introduce you to someone who needs to hear the good news from you. Also... somewhere here today you're likely to feel a nudge - tap - tug. Don't ignore it! That's probably the Holy Spirit prompting you some way. Let's talk about that after worship.

As we move into this week... The spin cycle It starts slow, builds in speed/intensity as the clothes are forced to edge of the drum ultimately all wrung out. That's anxiety in a nutshell...or guilt...or shame. It starts w/ a simple thought that goes round/round, spinning faster/faster, forcing you into a tight on-edge wrung out knot. Sometimes, the whole "machine" shakes, shudders, & makes noise because it is so off kilter.

Uncertainty, worry, anxiety shame or guilt can become constant companions.

Lebanese poet/philosopher Kahlil Gibran "Anxiety does not come from thinking about the future; but from wanting to control it."

Anxiety about the state of the world/lives...Shame that we aren't who we ought to be according to some exacting standard, & guilt that in this instance or that circumstance we messed up, let our guard down or let someone else down...

But rather than remind us of all about us that is out of control or out of place, Jesus grants freedom & fullness of life beyond anxiety shame & guilt. Scripture reassures us: "**Christ Jesus died for us & was raised to life for us, & he is sitting in the place of honour at God's right hand, pleading for us.**" – Rom 8:34"

Whatever the world throws at us...whatever the enemy uses against us...whatever temptations or trials tear at our hearts...whatever debris from our past dogs our steps...God is not ashamed of us, disappointed in us or out to punish us. We are loved. We are his. We are assured of grace in Christ larger than our need & more abundant than our fears.

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Lord, grow our lives toward you. Eyes fixed on you. Hearts tuned to yours. Ears listening for your voice. Hands reaching for our neighbour in love.

Lord, grow our lives to be like you. In every season or circumstance, among friends or foe, in victory or strife, leaning only on the Father's presence, the Spirit's power & your provision.

Lord, grow our lives in fruitfulness for you. Guide us to guide others into your love. Lead us to lead others to know your salvation. Speak to us so we might speak to others the promise & hope we find in you alone, through you Lord Jesus Christ we pray... Amen!

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. What things currently cause uncertainty (spin cycle) in your life?
Why? What's that like?
2. How do you, as a follower of Jesus, deal with life's unknowns? Ideal vs reality?

Now we'll sing...Lord I give you my heart...

BLESSING/SENDING

May God bless the world in which you move, and bless your home and bless your friends.

May God bless the eyes with which you see, and bless the ears with which you listen.

May God bless the way you use your hands, bless the way you employ your tongues...

*And the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always. Amen.*

6 Easter – '21 B – LIFE PULSE: LIFE BEYOND...ANXIETY SHAME & GUILT

The 21st century has made us precise people: GPS, laser-sighting, digital timekeeping, DNA tests, satellite targeting/guidance, self-driving/parking vehicles... From weather to medicine, farming to construction, fact/spell/grammar-check... We seek precision, certainty, exactness. But...Truthfully now:

How often does *your* life run *precisely* according to plan? How often do *you* feel about yourself, the world, the future, or life as you know it that it is *precisely exactly* as it should be? What things currently cause uncertainty in your life? Economy? Health choices? Weather/climate ("science is settled")? Family? Vocation/education? We'd like to control the future, but often feel at its mercy. We'd love to control the present...but learn fast we can't always manage today.

So you're a mother will a critically chronically ill child...wife/husband...child/parent you'd work if you could find a job – harvest if it would rain...you're in that SPOT & that SPOT isn't getting better & isn't going to get better...you can't force a different outcome. That's the narrative in Mk we just heard: *Then Jesus left Galilee & went north to the region of Tyre. He didn't want anyone to know which house he was staying in*, but he couldn't keep it a secret. Right away a woman who had heard about him came & fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil spirit, & she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter.

To set the scene...Jesus is 170 Ks from Jerusalem 65 Ks from his home turf, Nazareth in Galilee. Tyre is up north deep in pagan/Gentile/non-Jewish territory. What's he doing there? In Mk 6 Jesus sends the 12 out in ministry similar to His, Casting out demons, calling people to turn their lives back to the Father & healing the sick. They return & Jesus tries to lead them away for some rest, but the crowds overwhelm them & Jesus' feeds 5000. They leave again & again they're swamped by the needs of the people. That is repeated again & now it seems Jesus is going as far away as he can to just be w/ his disciples & perhaps give them & himself some downtime. *He didn't want anyone to know which house he was staying in*...

But there's this woman who knows what Jesus & the 12 have been doing & whose daughter is irretrievably in spiritual bondage. For Tyre that's not surprising. This part of the world; par for the course. Syrian-Phoenicia was known for idolatry, witchcraft & pagan religious practice. Some scholars assume this woman may have allowed her daughter to be used in a ceremony & has created a space for evil to take over her child's life. Can that happen? Yes...I tell folks all the time stay away from stuff that has non-Xn spirituality or "faith" attached to it. I got real stories of how "innocent" horoscope & Ouija & tarot & palm reading & infusions of certain lifestyle altering media

turned into something destructive...something repeated into the life of a child can become their reality.

All that to say...This woman seems the least likely person to get anything from Jesus in all the gospels. Ck the list...Gentile from a pretty dodgy region. Pagan maybe responsible for her own mess. Woman approaching a Jewish rabbi uninvited. Jesus isn't in this area to do ministry...he came for R & R not another demon to exorcise. Also...acc to Mt...Jesus specifically directs the 12 to go only *to the people of Israel — God's lost sheep*. Jesus was clear about his purpose. At this point his mission was to tell the Jewish people their long-awaited salvation was at hand. God's reign promised from forever was breaking into the world right b4 their eyes. His followers would be tasked to take the good news to the rest of the world...and we still are!

So Jesus' response to her...harsh as it sounds...is grounded in his understanding of his purpose in fulfilling the Father's will to retrieve/redeem God's people Israel first. Key word: FIRST. *"First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews. It isn't right to take food from the children & throw it to the dogs."* Now...Don't trip over that "dog"...Jews & non-Jews commonly spoke of one another w/ that language Muslims still refer to Jews that way. But Jesus isn't being as insulting as it sounds. He's being true to his understanding of his mission AND he uses the language not of scavenger wild feral canine, but of house-pet.

BUT SHE GETS IT...She embraces her non-Jew house-pet status while still holding out hope that if the Kingdom of grace has indeed broken into this world, then any scrap of that grace is enough for her need. *"That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children's plates."* Her reasoning is that the life-giving abundant-grace bread of Jesus' kingdom is so lavish plentiful & bountiful there's more than enough to feed not just Israel, but the entire world...& her little girl. She gets it. Bread here is a metaphor of all the blessings of the Messiah's ministry & the Saviour's kingdom. She understands that in Jesus there's food enough for her, for her daughter, even though she is the most unworthy & unlikely of people to get close to God's table. In humility, she's ok w/ that.

In Jn 4 Jesus meets a similar woman & says: *"If you only knew the gift God has for you & who you are speaking to, you would ask me, & I would give you living water."* I'll give you water that quenches thirsts you can't even name...you didn't even know were thirsty. Water that he later says will become a bubbling spring welling up to eternal life...water so abundant you'll need eternity to fully enjoy its blessing in your life...water so plenteous it will rush through you & wash into the lives of the people around you.

And you know her whole village is transformed 1st by her witness then by Jesus staying in their town & living among them as living water grace upon grace...

But in these women we see our own story...not deserving not worthy no right to be ours, but God's grace is so unrestrained/overflowing, even the crumbs are enough. The bread of Jesus' saving kingdom is so abundant that it's available to all, even the most unlikely...us. There's more than enough in what Jesus provides to overcome anything that could keep us away. There's more than enough in what Jesus provides...it's larger than our need & more abundant than our fears.

This woman's life has been on that constant spin-cycle...Anxiety about the state of her & her daughter's life...out of control...under a power too strong...in bondage she cannot break...Guilt that it's likely her fault...she's let her daughter down...she's made a mess she can't clean up...Shame that she has no worth no dignity no value...by the standards of the world; she's nothing/nobody.

But hear the invitation from Jesus & the promise of Scripture to live beyond...

1st...Come to God as you are, not as you ought to be. Ps 139:1 - *Lord, you have examined my heart & know everything about me.* What secret are you going to keep from God? What is there that he doesn't already know? What pretense can you maintain b4 the Father? Given that...2nd...Ask God to reveal & forgive not excuse

your sin...A couple weeks ago I encouraged you to meditate on Ps 139:23-24 - *Search me, O God, & know my heart; test me & know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, & lead me along the path of everlasting life.* CS Lewis says, "What we call 'asking God's forgiveness' very often really consists in asking God to accept our excuses." We want him to remember the extenuating circumstances that led us to do what we did. That's not the path of everlasting life. That's just assuring ourselves we really weren't at fault...just a mistake or the illness talking...bad day...caught off guard...busy/headache. Not only pardon but also power

3rd...Turn fully to Jesus...Part of my preparation this week took me to Ps 25 vss 6-7 *Remember, O Lord, your compassion & unfailing love, which you have shown from long ages past. Do not remember the rebellious sins of my youth. Remember me in the light of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O Lord.* Genuine faith...that lives beyond anxiety shame guilt worry fear clings to Jesus & trusts him to heal, restore, & save. It relies on him to do what he says he came to do. God remember who you are & forget what I've done. Remember your intention for me & forget the disaster I've made of your desires. Remember your eternal attributes & your everlasting character & forget my sin. *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.* – Rom 8:1

The good news... no matter how crazy how difficult how messed up how stressful how scary how whatever our lives are, God chose you. God loves you. God walks alongside you, & God holds onto you through all of life & even through death into the eternal life God gives.

Right here...Right now...hear that promise...trust Christ's abundant grace...be drawn again into the embrace of love that has no ending & into life that is rich & full in spite of this world's threats & assaults. Know that Christ's gift of life is yours...now Eternal life in Christ is not just life after we die. Eternal life is not only a gift of immortality or a future life in God's heaven, but it is a life shaped by the knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus today...living now in the unending presence of God in the midst of this life trusting that there is abundant grace for us in every moment for every need for every day..."Christ Jesus died for us & was raised to life for us, & he is sitting in the place of honour at God's right hand, pleading for us." – Rom 8:34"

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Take it home...

What's one thing you'll do this week to live beyond anxiety, guilt or shame?

30 secs... Go...I'll pray for us to close...