



Thoughts on the Journey

Suanne Gettings – Pastoral Associate
August 16, 2020 - Matthew 15:21-28

A candle in the center of the table was lit. The room was safe. The food was plentiful. We shared our faith in prayer before the meal. The laughter and love was flowing as we celebrated another family birthday. As a mother, it gives me great joy to see the friendship my children share with one another and the bonds they have with their father and me. With each child's birthday, I can't help but reflect on the day they were born and the many changes we have been through as they made their way to adulthood. These moments we share together become increasingly more important because they have become less frequent due to their busy lives.

After one of these family gatherings and the day was done, I was lying in bed giving thanks for my family. Before long, my thoughts drifted from the comfort of my own life, to the many news reports from around the globe: the murders in our cities, the violence in Central America that is driving children to our borders, the barrage of hatred in the Middle East, the deaths resulting from the opioid crisis in our country – the images kept spinning in my head. Before I knew it, the noise and chaos of the world invaded my bedroom. I tried to put myself in the place of the families marked by any one of these horrors and imagine what it must be like to be a mother in the midst of the evil. What would I be willing to do to protect my children from harm? How far would I go to protect them from torment and terror? Suddenly these children were no longer faceless; I put the faces of my children in their place. I tried to search the hearts of these mothers who love their children as much as I love mine. I could only imagine, but couldn't possibly grasp the enormity of their fear and trepidation.

Just for a moment, I will ask you to put all your preconceived notions and politics aside. Close your eyes and step out of the comfort of your own life as you know it. Imagine a child or loved one of your own in any of these horrible situations. What would you risk to save them? What would you be willing to give to bring them healing and safety? What would you ask of God if you cried out to him for help?

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus and his disciples withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. There, he was approached by a Canaanite woman from that region desperately begging the Lord's help for her daughter who was possessed by demons. Initially, Jesus does not answer her.

His disciples, in agitation, encouraged Jesus to send her away. Their response seemed to be cold and heartless. Being a Canaanite, she was a descendent of a cursed people. In the Old Testament, when Joshua led the people of Israel into Canaan, they had been commanded to destroy the Canaanites (Deut 7:2). In addition, this territory at the time of our Lord, was known for its vile religious practices. This woman had a few strikes against her as she pleaded on her daughter's behalf. Jesus then tells her that he was sent only for the lost sheep of Israel.

This mother was not taking 'no' for an answer as she persists in pleading for the healing of her daughter. Then Jesus said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." She persisted, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters". Then Jesus said to her,

“O woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish.” And the woman's daughter was healed from that hour.

Hearing of the miracles that Jesus was performing for others, the spark of faith was ignited in this mom. She needed something more than her dead religion or her depraved society could provide. Driven by love, she was anxious and desperate to deliver her daughter from the grip of evil. Jesus was her last hope and she was willing to beg and plead for his compassion and mercy. It was because of her love, her new-found faith, and her persistent prayer that Jesus delivered her and her daughter from the iniquity that possessed them.

The darkness of this world can provoke our hearts to scramble in fear and fear can bind our souls rendering us useless in the face of evil. We may wonder how God can allow such wickedness to bleed through humanity. Like the Canaanite woman, perhaps the evil and sinfulness we are witnessing around us today will be a path to our holiness. At times of comfort, there is little growth and at times of growth, there is little comfort. As Christians, we must have confidence in Christ's love and mercy. We need to cry out in prayer without ceasing. We must not fight evil with evil, but rather put on the mind of Christ. We must look inside to see if our resolve has been dimmed by discouragement and commit to reignite our own faith so we can be the light that dispels the darkness.