

MARK 7:24-30

GETTING INTO THE STORY

²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁸ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹ Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is confronted by the evil he will endure in the immediate future. In the midst of his anguish he does not rail at God or men, but after making a plea to be delivered from the suffering, he acknowledges God's authority by saying, "*Yet not what I will, but what you will*" (Mark 14:36c). The script had been written by God and Jesus knew the author's authority and his place in the story.

In the Gentile land of Tyre, the Syrophenician woman recognized the story, the author and acknowledged her place in the story. She recognized that Jesus was speaking to her in a parable, and like the Jewish leaders, she recognized the story. However, in contrast to the Jews, she did not deny and reject her assigned role, but answered Jesus in the terms of the parable. She saw through the words, recognized the message and responded humbly. She acknowledged the truth of Jesus' words and at the same time made the profession that in spite of that reality Jesus could heal her daughter. What an incredible expression of faith.

Elsewhere Jesus says that the "*first will be last and the last first*" (Mark 10:31). Could it be that those who are "first" do not know their proper place in God's story? Our lives need to be lived in the knowledge that we deserve nothing, but rather in the revealed hope that in God's story the kingdom of God is ours through his grace. God's banquet table is so great that the smallest crumb is greater than all our needs.

Holy God, you are the author of my life and the life of the world. Yours is the will that dictates the story of human existence. In you all things have their being and their purpose. Keep me ever on the same page as you. Help me recognize the story even when the light is bad and my eyes grow weak. Let the light of your Spirit shine your truth into my life and convict me of my own dark broodings. Thank you for the role you have given me to play. Strengthen me to live it according to your plot. Amen.