

Mark 7:24-30

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.

There are times when we go on vacation and we can't wait to get back home. We look forward to returning home because it is where we are most comfortable. We make our living arrangements around our comforts. As the famous expression goes "there is no place like home." Most of the time when people want to go on vacation it is something that they look forward to, plan for it, and save up for it. It is something that they really want to do. Otherwise, they would stay at home where they are comfortable. Sometimes people need to go on vacation so that they can get away for different reasons such as stress, fatigue, or a simple respite.

We learn from the gospels that Jesus faced many problems. Large crowds would flock to him and press upon him to the point that it is problematic. As he heals people there is the demand for more. The more he gives, the more people want. Antagonists conspire against him and challenge him repeatedly. We see many occasions where Jesus just has to get away. When he crosses the lake crowds follow after him. When he loses the crowd they hunt for him and find him. No matter where he goes he has a crowd problem. At times he can't even eat in peace. So, Jesus left Galilee and went to an area that was not predominantly Jewish. Jesus needed to get away from the crowds and the opposition.

In today's Scripture Mark does not say why Jesus came to Gentile territory. There are several theories; the most popular one is because he needed to escape the crowds. He apparently needed to get away where he did not have to preach, heal, or engage in his mission. Outside of Galilee he was at a private residence where he did not want anyone to know that he was there. The Scripture indicates that he needs some respite, peace, and rest. However, he cannot remain incognito. People found out where he was and demand help. Even on respite he still has problem of people demanding something from him. A Gentile woman begs him. Notice the wording, she does not just ask, she begs for help. Jesus refuses to help her. In essence Jesus says "no." The Scripture tells us what Jesus actually said and it seems rude and offensive. There are many theories as to why. I think the reason he refused to help is a matter of priority. The mission of Jesus takes priority and Jesus needed respite for the energy and spiritual fortitude to achieve that mission.

It is a lesson on boundaries as we learn that even Jesus sometimes refused to help someone. This does not mean that Jesus is unwilling to help. It means that Jesus has to balance the demands that were placed on him. There are many more times when Jesus says yes and they are based on the need that exists and the faith of the individual.

As a church we face frequent calls for help with utility bills, gas, food, and shelter. During the COVID-19 pandemic the frequency multiplied significantly. Sometimes people forget who they called and end up calling you again. The problem is that there is more need out there than resources available to meet that need. This means that we as a church are in the unfortunate position of deciding who we help and how much we help. Sometimes we simply have to say no. Then we tend to feel guilty because we know that the Christian spirit is to give. We feel guilty when we cannot help someone. However, today we learn from Jesus sometimes you have to say no. This is because we cannot do it all. There are many people that try to take advantage of you. The more you give, the more they want. Once they find a source they come back to that source wanting more. We often face con artists, beggars, liars, and many excuses. We simply can't do it all when there is more need than resources.

Today's Scripture helps the individual by providing a lesson on boundaries when you simply cannot do it all. You are probably familiar with the expression *You can't please everyone*. Well, you can't help everyone either. There are some people that are so needy that they do not respect boundaries. So, it is up to you to maintain the boundaries. You cannot let others drain you. If you do, then you are not good for others. It is not good for the self, the family, or other future requests for help. Those who drain you are needy and selfish. They do not respect boundaries because they are too needy and selfish to adequately realize the boundary lines. They can only see things from their perspective and are not able to realize the consequences their demands place on you.

It is up to you to protect yourself by maintaining boundaries so that you can be available for your family, friends, and others. It is very important for you to protect yourself. Jesus protected himself by leaving Galilee and then by initially refusing to help someone. He ended up helping her because of her faith. Notice that the scriptures report that it is the people of faith that he helped. It is not that their faith healed them but that due to their degree of faith he healed them. Jesus had a purpose in life. He would allow some distractions but he knew where to draw the line so that he could achieve his mission. You have a purpose in life. You can allow some distractions but you also need to draw the line and protect yourself from those that seek to take advantage of you.