

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 8, 2024



IDENTITY

being a people of love

by Drew Downs

We often talk like the “real” us can be revealed with stress. Perhaps it is closer to “the other me”—the one I am when I am stressed. Who we are when we’re confused, uncomfortable, or disappointed, however, is a part of us either way.

Who we are when we’re confronted by something someone else sees in us is just as important. Such as when we’re confronted for racial bias or are invited to look at our

people’s history of racism, bigotry, and oppression. Do we react with anger, bigotry? Are we incredulous or skeptical? Do we listen and interrogate?

Those of us who follow Jesus see our place in the world as people of love more than any other identity marker. So when we confront our own lack of love, we have some work to do. But our first work is to turn to that love here and now with this person.

ORDINARY TIME

2024

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

September Events

I'm excited for the start of the new program year which begins this week! Our summer fun and feasting has prepared us for new expressions of community and opportunity to learn and grow.

K*I*D*S Worship returns September 8 at the 10:00 service. This is our opportunity for young members to participate in age-appropriate Episcopal worship and learning.

UCM Barbecue – September 8 from 11:30–1:30. This is one of the main fundraisers for United Campus Ministries—the ecumenical college ministry cosponsored by the Diocese of Indianapolis.

Church Picnic – September 15 at 10:00 in Hawthorne Park. Join us for worship in the park, stay for the picnic, and bring food to share! *Note: no 8:00 service.*

Family Game Night – September 20 from 6:00–8:00. Join us for food and fellowship as we gather for a potluck dinner, then play games and puzzles.

Pride Festival – September 21 from 3:00 to 8:00 on the campus of Indiana State University. Come by and see our booth!

Rector's Forum – September 22 after the 10:00 service. We will help each other start preparing for end-of-life decisions.

Gather Transform Send Workshop – September 29 after the 10:00 service. Join us as we explore a new way of seeing our church and help us see our ministry with new eyes.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2024

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 18B

September 8, 2024

Collect

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 7:24-37

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 Syrophenician 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. Then he 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."

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

These two encounters don't seem like much. A woman looking for help and the healing of a man. Jesus has made much more miraculous work than this already. But what is notable is how grounded these two moments are. Particularly grounded in people outside the faith.

And before we go any further, let us take in the thematic growth in this moment. We've gone from literally feeding thousands of people, healing people by the hundreds and thousands. That is the scope of chapter six. And when we come to this moment, an intimate moment with a Syrophenician woman and man who is mute and deaf, we come here *after* all of the amazing stuff. Sequentially, we are invited to see this as further *escalation* of Jesus's power. That's what the entire gospel of Mark has led us to, after all. We are building more and more on Jesus exposing *more* of himself—his power and place in the cosmos.

So why are these two moments a big deal? Because these are not Hebrew people. And Jesus healing them, *servicing them* in this way is a bigger deal than feeding five thousand or stilling a storm.

Most Christians take this for granted, I suspect. Serving the other is famously seen as a *Christian* response. And in a real way, we think of walking on water, for instance, as a bigger deal. But *this* is the bigger deal. And I suppose we still have a lot to learn from that fact.

Jesus breaks a boundary here he was taught to never break. And even does so reluctantly, showing just how significant it is. Where then are our boundaries? There are easy ones we can name, like poverty and class, political and denominational. But what particular moments and individuals, have caused you to question the rules you were taught? When have you bravely changed your mind?

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