



St Johns
Being the Gospel to all People

3RD SEPTEMBER 2021

Greetings

**A reflection on
reading: Mark 7:24-37**

Updates

&Zoom link

Greetings my friends,

It is end of another week in level 4, while the rest of the country is in level 3. I wonder how you are doing. I love and hate lockdown. I love the way lockdown invites me to take stock of my life, but I hate the fact that I cannot see and speak to people face to face. I do miss seeing people face to face so much. I read something this week that really arrested my attention. I love Barbara Brown Taylor. One of my favorite books she wrote is Gospel Medicine. If you are looking for something to read, that is one book I will highly recommend.

Anyway, here is what Barbara Brown Taylor said about being lockdown.

“The pandemic’s greatest gift to me was to bring me home. When I landed at Hartsfield airport on March 8, 2020, COVID was not yet a thing. A week later it was, with no end in sight. The virus brought all of my energies home for the first time in forty years—no kidding, forty years--so that I walked around my house, my yard, and my marriage with a whole new set of eyes. The place I lived was no longer my landing pad; it was my dwelling place. I started cooking every night. I discovered how far behind I was on keeping house. While other people learned how to work from home and homeschool their kids, I started talking to trees—just a few at first, then all of them. I found out which birds were passing through and which ones raise their babies here. My go-to mantra (“I don’t have time”) lost its meaning. I had time, lots of time, to tend and befriend my place on earth. Now that time seems to be coming to an end, and my heart is aching. If I want to stay grounded in this dwelling place, it’s up to me now to say why.”

- Barbara Brown Taylor

A reflection on reading: Mark 7:24-37

Today's reading is following the lectionary readings. For those of us who are not familiar with the lectionary. The Lectionary is readings that the liturgical church uses to make their way through a three year rotation of reading through the whole bible. This Sunday we are going to read together Mark 7:24-37.

What I would like to invite us to do this week, is to read this passage out loud. I want to invite us to engage in an ancient Ignatius practice that the Jesuits do whenever they encounter a story in the Gospels. They usually try and put their bodies into the story. Here is what I mean by that: they usually try to imagine what they are feeling, or thinking, or smelling, or touching, tasting, and/or sensing.

Another way of thinking about this is to imagine it as if you were watching this as a scene in a movie. Pay attention to what gets stirred up for you.

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.

Jesus Cures a Deaf Man

³¹ 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. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

This is a hard passage. I had a visceral reaction to this passage, and I have always had. I tried to pinpoint this week, why this passage is so hard. I have realized it is not just the fact that Jesus uses harsh language. I am familiar with that. Because we are used to Jesus saying harsh things sometimes. As we saw last week, the harsh words are usually directed to the religious leaders and political authorities, whenever they are using their powers to oppress outsiders. That is usually when Jesus steps in.

What bothered me with this week’s reading. Is not Jesus’ words. But the recipient of Jesus’ harsh words. A vulnerable woman asking for help for her daughter who is suffering. This is the kind of people Jesus is usually drawn to helping. And so, something is going on here. Because this is a

very uncharacteristic story. There is something unusual here. What is happening? This is a complex passage of scripture.

What I want to do this week is instead of simplifying it. I want to let it be hard. To let it be complex. And invite you all to dig into it. And see what God might reveal to us through this passage of scripture. I would like to invite you to **stay alert** and **wrestle** with this passage and **wonder** with me what it might mean for us here at St Johns Bucklands Beach-Cooperating Parish at this time.

Updates

Take a look at our website this week. We have a list of businesses in our neighborhood that are providing contactless services. We want to support our local business at these unpredictable difficult times. I believe it is one way we can practice neighborliness with each other.

<https://stjohnsbb.org.nz/>

This week was Shania's last week with us as Mandarin Speaking Lay Pastor.

Many of you will know that Shania put in her resignation last month and last Sunday was her last service with the Mandarin Speaking Community. We are grateful for all the good work that Shania and her leadership team have manage to do for the last 10 years. We are very saddened by her resignation. But we pray that God will continue to lead and be gracious to Shania and her family – I will miss working alongside her.

Shania's resignation certainly creates a huge vacuum and loads of questions, about what happens next and what is the future of the Mandarin Speaking Community. At the moment, there is a lot of deliberation and exploration of different ways to respond to the new development. I will try and address this issue the Sunday following our Parish Council meeting this coming Tuesday.

In the meantime, can I invite you all to be in prayers for the Parish Council as we engage in conversations, and as we discern what might God be saying about all this.

Blessings,

Rev. Jeff Odhiambo

Here is a link to our Sunday Morning gathering.

Jeff is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9895548740?pwd=VFduaXNJWCtJYnErZEVJME1NUm9JQT09>

Meeting ID: 989 554 8740

Passcode: 7777777

AROUND THE WORLD IN 5 DAYS



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Year 0-9 Students

Drop off from 8:30am- Pick up by 5pm

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Email :
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245 Bucklands Beach Road, Bucklands Beach

