

What do we learn at the earliest of ages, especially if you have brothers or sisters: Share! Share what you have been given, be generous especially with those who have less. That message crosses cultures and generations and even centuries.

So what is going on in the gospel story we hear today? Earlier in Matthew's Gospel he has healed the sick numerous times, he has fed the 5000, he has walked on the water. He has many gifts to be shared and yet he stops short of helping this woman because she is a Canaanite not of the house of Israel. She was not part of his mission. Earlier he sends the 12 Apostles out and tells them go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus was sure of it, he reiterates that in two different ways, just in the passage we heard. So was he not taught the message to share? Like all of us, unless something makes us look again, Jesus was operating out of his experience. Jesus was a Jew and, like he saw growing up, the rabbis taught Jews. The prophets called out and challenged fellow Jews to change their lives. This was the mission Jesus had embraced.

But something in this woman stretched Jesus' understanding of his mission: "*Great is your faith!*" he proclaims. Even though she was not of the house of Israel she believed that Jesus could cure her daughter and, calling him Lord, she was persistent in expressing that belief. Her persistence also shows her belief in her own inherent dignity as a person as well as that of her daughter. She knew that she wasn't someone who could just be "sent away" as his disciples had asked - they, who also had judged her, believed she didn't belong. "*Great is your faith!*" is Jesus' response and her daughter was healed. The story might be titled, "*The Day Jesus Blinked*". I think it is a wonderful story about Jesus' humanness as well as a story that teaches us to be willing to hear and see more. After all, if Jesus can change his mind who are we to refuse to change ours?

The last line in our first reading from Isaiah challenges that to the people of his day: the offerings of the foreigners "*will be acceptable on my altar,*" says the Lord, "*for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*" No exceptions, by language or legal status or nationality or color of skin or economic status or educational status. All are welcome to the house of the Lord - and each of us is to be a living house, a dwelling place for the Lord. It is fitting that we are hearing these readings after a week of news about white supremacists and racism. The dignity of that woman begging Jesus for help is the same dignity every person bears as created by God. Being a

product of our experiences and of the ways in which we were raised we can fail to see our own prejudices or blindness or fear. We can put people we've never met into a labeled box, closed so quickly and so tight that we don't even realize we've put them there. Until, in someone's dignity and belief, they stand up and point it out. Then we have a choice to either work toward change and uphold that dignity or dismiss it as non-existent or merely political correctness, ignoring that dignity.

I don't know if it is true for you, but I find it hard to admit when I'm wrong. Yet that stubbornness can lead me into sin without knowing until I pause to look. I think it is what St. Paul is pointing out in that somewhat confusing reading about disobedience we heard - and we trust in the mercy of God to help us - not only to be forgiven, but to change.