

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**September 8, 2024**

**LECTIONARY 23**

**A Table-scrap Feast**

The story of the Syrophenician woman is one of the most puzzling in all the gospels. It raises more questions than answers: Why did Jesus turn her down? Was he testing her? Was the human side of him mistaken? Perhaps Jesus was just grumpy? Unfortunately, the gospel writer did not record what Jesus was thinking, only what he said, and those words remain troubling.

But we do know that Jesus was moved by the Syrophenician woman's persistence and faith. She bravely crossed multiple barriers—gender, ethnicity, class, religion—to get the help her daughter needed. In the end, Jesus grants her the mercy she seeks: he heals her daughter and restores their family. The woman had come begging for crumbs and instead received an abundant feast.

Who is the Syrophenician woman today? Maybe she is one of the millions who face daily violence and abuse, or perhaps the countless many who live with addiction or mental illness. She may be an asylum-seeker or refugee, reluctantly fleeing home because it's no longer safe for her family. The woman in today's gospel represents all who are outcast and ignored. This story is a powerful reminder of the inclusivity and compassion at the heart of Jesus' teachings and deeds. It is also a call to action, urging us to open our hearts and extend love and mercy to those who are marginalized or in need, just as Jesus did.

God has this amazing ability to bring about change in astonishing ways, through the most unexpected people. God's work in our lives is always surprising us, shaking up our worldview, and making abundance out of scarcity. Even when all we expect for ourselves or others are scraps, God has a larger vision: a banquet to which we are all invited.

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