

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 20, 2017

This has been a difficult week for folks who follow the news of social conversations and conflicts within our nation. I find it interesting that people have different takes on racial concerns and power issues based on who they know what stories they have heard. Clearly, it is a challenge to talk to people with whom we strongly disagree. It takes courage and humility to even hope to find common ground with some who seem so unlike us, perhaps whom we fear. Now if we haven't judged and condemned another harshly, it will be easier to hope and find agreement which allows for life changing relationships to form. Without relationships, there will be no change, no growth in love, especially if yelling replaces relationships. Compassion allows actions to speak louder than words and to overcome years of strongly held positions. Remember Jesus on the cross. Remember Saul who must have heard stories of Jesus, though he doesn't seem to have ever met him in person before he died. Saul changed abruptly because of the compassion of Jesus, who followed the heart of the law.

In today's Gospel lesson, we don't know what Jesus was thinking when he compared healing a Gentile's daughter to throwing food to dogs. I'm guessing he is telling a parable which would worm its way into his disciples' hearts and minds. Usually parables have shock value. Perhaps the shock value is his declaration that this Gentile has great faith after Jesus has wondered out loud about how much he should spend time with Gentiles.

Isaiah certainly believes that non-Jews can love and serve the Lord. What are the limits of our faith? Who and what kind of people do we imagine are outside the scope of God's mercy and peace? Who might never have faith?

And how is her faith great? In her desperate plea, she's saying she doesn't need to walk on water. She doesn't need to follow Jesus around or be a Jew like him. She doesn't need to have the whole meal of faith—just this one small thing, healing. A very small thing. Someone else can have the big, perfect faith. She just loves her daughter and wants her to be whole. Nothing else matters. That's all the faith she wants. Hmm. Is her crumb of faith, love? This simple thing, a mother's love, very common, very key to all of life.

The disciples are consumed by ego, petty irritation, old rivalries, hatreds, and bigotries. For them, faith is a limited, expensive, place setting commodity. It is only for those who earn it and have proper status--people like them. People with whom they are comfortable.

They still have not discovered the abundance of God. For them everything is limited. If they give too much away, if they share too much, if they are too generous, Faith will go bankrupt. Financially. Spiritually. Emotionally. There is just not enough to go around for everyone.

This Gentile mother knows otherwise. Jesus can heal her daughter, that's all the faith she needs. The rest will take care of itself. No need to worry about the complexities of the disciples.

Abundance happens in strange unexpected ways. What is the abundance of God? Is it concerned with things like money and other stuff? . . .or about human resources—relationships? Money buys things, people bring us joy, hope, and peace. The abundance of relationships is a greater abundance than a large bank account and all the creature comforts we can imagine.

Perhaps another secret of abundance is we are just fine living with crumbs of healing, crumbs of hope, crumbs of peace, crumbs of love. The presence of a crumb of good is much more powerful than a loaf of greed and fear and loneliness. Let us seek crumbs of faith from our Lord who shows us love from a cross. There is immense power and hope in love. Fear and greed are cannibals. They eat their own.

Whatever your crumb of faith is, that is the growing edge of your faith journey. That's all that matters. That is God's gift to you and the rest of the world. Thanks be to God.