

Sermon Title: **“It is Not Fair”**

Bible: **Mark 7:24-37 (NRSV)**

When: on Sunday, September 5th, 2021

Where: about 25 people (including YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we come to you, because we want to listen. We come to you, because we want to speak. Please be gracious to us. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Who Said “It is not fair”?

Today’s Gospel reading of Mark comes from the lectionary. I love this story of a Syrophoenician woman, because it is challenging and because it is liberating. There was a conversation between Jesus and this Gentile woman. In other words, it was a conversation between a Jewish man and a foreign woman. This foreign woman was desperate, because her daughter had an unclean spirit. I believe that all of us have experienced the moments when our family, our children, our grandchildren, or our friends were sick. How much were you desperate to pray and help? When I was sick, my mother would say that it would be better for herself to be sick instead of myself. The foreign woman was very desperate to help her daughter. She came to the Jewish man to beg. It was not easy at that time for a woman to talk one on one with a man. And being a foreign woman made it even more difficult to talk with a Jewish man. In that society, there was a wall between men and women. There was a wall between different

racers. Because her daughter was what was most important to her, those walls did not matter. The foreign woman bowed down and she begged Jesus to heal her daughter. However, the Jewish man said, "It is not fair." Who said "It is not fair?" According to today's scripture reading, Jesus said that! Jesus said, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Because Jesus said so, did the desperate woman understand and go away from Jesus? No. She was desperate. She dared to argue against Jesus. She might have said, "Jesus, you are right. We are not children. We are dogs. But even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." She was willing to do anything to help her daughter. Even a crumb would be enough, if it came from God. Maybe she would come to know how big God's grace was and how powerful God's healing was. So, this Jewish man changed his mind and healed the daughter of this desperate foreign woman. Interestingly, the next story in the Gospel of Mark was one of Jesus curing a deaf man, who could not hear nor speak. Jesus made the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.

2. What Image of God Do You Have?

Do you like this story of this foreign woman? Were you surprised when Jesus said, "It is not fair?" Even Jesus could not be free from his time and his place on the earth, because Jesus was a human just like us. As Jesus needed to eat and drink, Jesus needed to live as a member of his society and his community. He was a man, and he was Jewish. However, he talked with the most marginalized people. He made a space and time for those who were not able to speak, and for those who were not able to be heard. Jesus changed himself, because of the cry of God's

people, and because of God's love and grace. God created all people. God's overflowing grace does care about all people beyond the wall of gender, and beyond the wall of race.

I distinguish between Godself and the image of God that I have. I am a Korean. I am a man. Because I am a foreigner, I might be able to see more of God. But because I am a man, I might not be able to see some aspects of God. Sometimes, my image of God helps me to be myself, and to be brave in difficult situations. But I need to confess that my image of God could make walls between me and God's loved ones. My image of God is changing and evolving, but I believe that God loves me all the time. My faith and my life is in the hands of God's love and grace. So, I can live today, day by day, as a Christian. Even our Jesus lived on the earth with his disciples and his people, and showed a great example to us. We cannot be perfect, and we are not perfect, but we are on our faith journey together toward God's welcoming grace all the time.

3. God's Grace & God's Table

Today, we have communion. We practice open communion. It means that all are welcome to God's table. In front of God's table, and God's grace, we cannot help but be humble and be thankful. Maybe our faith, our weakness, our confidence, or our bias do not matter at the table of our Lord. Our Lord's grace is overflowing beyond the walls, inviting us all the time, and transforming us day by day.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we are here because we are not perfect. We are here because of your abundant grace and love. Please help us to open our ears and eyes to see and hear more of your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.