

Desperado

Matthew 15:21-28

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Earlier this week when I emailed this morning's Worship Plan to Staff, DeWayne replied within the hour, "***Why did the Eagles tune pop into my head immediately..lol.***" ☒

To which I replied, "***Because it did when I was working on this.***" Knowing how musically inclined Calvin's worship team is, ***Desperado*** probably popped into just about everyone's head. That song means so much to my family. Josh dedicated it to Jen for his senior solo. It was the most the heart-string-pulling solo I've heard in my entire life. Thanks Josh. We love you. We're so proud of you!

More to the point, as our offspring venture back to school, I'd like to ask you this morning to think about a time when you and or a loved one were desperate. Maybe it was a lost job, a marital crisis or relationship falling apart, a problem with a child, a teacher, or a friend, serious financial trouble, struggling at school, deteriorating health, a diagnosis or treatment protocol, or a persistently fluid pandemic.

Well there's no doubt the Canaanite Woman in today's lectionary Gospel lesson was desperate. If she didn't do something, she'd become no better off than her daughter. That is, in the words of the Bible, she'd become tormented by a demon or cruelly afflicted by an evil spirit. Or in today's words, if she was desperate for much longer, she'd have a mental break. Just like prolonged exposure to carcinogens whether they're in cigarettes or asbestos, increases your chances of getting cancer, prolonged exposure to the stress of desperation increases your chances of having a mental health break.

There's another desperado, another hero in this scripture that I've never heard or read much about. We don't know her name, only that she's had a mental health break. Here's her account of today's scripture:

It seemed like the world was caving in. Loneliness and fear dominated. Thinking was replaced by trembling. There didn't seem to be anyway out.

My mom would do ANYTHING to make things better. But I was so entrenched that I was dead to the world, that I couldn't move, that the best I could do was just to get by. Even the things that I loved, that used to come easily, that I was born to do, were a burden. And the more I '***got by***' doing them, the more they cut like a knife, the deeper they plunged into my heart, into my soul, into the very essence of who I was.

I was dying for anything to feel again, I chased things I knew won't help. Things I knew would hurt me. Things that pulled me farther and farther from who I truly was. Every time my mom and my friends gently tried to get me to return to who I truly was, it pushed them farther and farther away from who I wanted in my life.

I knew that I had it better than most people. I still had a roof over my head, I still had food to eat. But I would have done anything to make it feel better, even things I knew would hurt me in the long run. So I rationalized that I'd do it just this once. And that once turned into twice. And a month passed and I was still doing it and it still hadn't made me feel any better. And one month turned into two and two into three. And before I knew it, I was in an entirely different season of life, but I hadn't gotten anywhere. I kept digging my hole deeper and deeper. And I was even more alone and cold, and isolated than before.

My mom and friends were still there, and they wanted to help but I had beaten them into submission. They told me that only I could help yourself. That only I could make the changes necessary to be get back up. I wanted to become human again, I wanted to accept their help I wanted to follow their wisdom, but I couldn't because I was completely numb. I didn't even feel the cold. I was blind to the beauty of a snow flake and couldn't tell it apart from and the stars and moon on a warm summers night. I no longer felt good or bad. I was completely and entirely indifferent to feelings because I hadn't felt anything in such a long time.

But then my mother, did the unthinkable. I guess it's different for you these days, but back in those days, women were just above slaves in the social hierarchy, men owned us. Add to that the fact that they were our enemies and we were there's. It was unreal because my mom never was religious, as a matter of fact, she was pretty anti-religious, but she reached out, and grabbed the arm of a Rabbi, and begged him to heal me. He had these men following him, they jumped in like they're Caesar's personal bodyguards defending the Rabbi and looking at my mom like she was an assassin. The Rabbi held them back and the men grumbled trying to get the Rabbi to move on. But, sensing my mom was desperate the Rabbi paused //// and gave us all a life lesson.

The Rabbi mocked the outdated laws dividing us, the laws making us enemies. To get his followers attention he even used some of the slang words they used for our people like calling us a dog. I told you we

were just above slaves. And my mom had a audacity to give it right back to him and he even laughed when she bowed in submission and said that even dogs eat scraps from their master's table. It was almost as if he knew my mom would not stop at anything to help me.

Then the moment he said that my mom's faith was great, I felt again. The fog was lifted. I actually felt the warmth of the desert sand I was sitting on. I could see the sun setting and I could clearly hear his followers murmuring that the Rabbi never said their faith was great. One of them, even got angry recalling that Jesus had only said that two (2) other times, to a Centurion and to some woman who had a bleeding problem. My mom, of all the people, was the third.

The Rabbi, we call him Jesus, really showed his followers that he loved everyone, all of God's people, regardless of whether they were Jews or Gentiles, regardless of whether they were men or women and regardless of their social status. He loved everyone the same. That's what he showed me.

I really liked your children's message this morning. I like that Solomon was desperately fighting to hold onto hope. Hope that he finally found when he ***Let somebody love him!*** I like that because it was when the Rabbi said, "***Great is your faith***" that I let somebody love me. I'll never forget that moment, the moment I loved someone more deeply than I ever loved anything. The moment I loved because he first loved me and saved my life.

Friends, In these fluid days of COVID were we're all struggling, where we're all desperate, many of us are on the brink of our own breaks. May we all fight to hold onto hope. May we all let somebody love you. And May we all know that he first loved you and saved your life.

Amen?!