

## Proper 15 Year A 2011

What I see in the world about us is how very easy it is to believe that external things hold the power in life. We think that money, or lack of it, determines our abundance; we think that other people's behavior determines our happiness; we think that success or failure, as the world defines it, determines our self-worth.

But ultimately isn't it our thinking, more than our outer circumstances that determine whether we live lives of harmony and peace or of pain and despair. I'm sure we have all known at some time in our lives, healthy, wealthy people who were depressed and unhappy, and people with critical illnesses who could honestly attest to joy.

So how did we get here? How did we come to give more value to those external things? People who have studied these things will tell us that it's the scientific worldview which has dominated Western civilization for centuries. A worldview that is always pronouncing how the external world is the only "real" world. It's only real if we can see it, hear it, touch it, taste it or feel it. So the mind from this perspective is stuck and has little or no power in either creating or transforming material circumstances. The mind is held captive to whatever it encounters.

In the past century this worldview has begun to change in dramatic ways but most of us in this so called modern world have a ways to go to catch up. Science has been leading us in areas like Quantum physics and other cutting-edge theories showing us that our consciousness is more than a mere witness to external events. Instead our minds are now recognized for their role in causing and transforming events. As sages have proclaimed throughout the centuries, the world is actually a reflection of what

we think, and as we change our thoughts, we can change our world.

I think Jesus would agree with that idea. We see him change his thoughts in today's Gospel. A Canaanite woman was shouting at him. She pleaded with him to show mercy and to heal her tormented daughter. A Canaanite woman, an outcast, the lowest of the lowest, akin to a dog, this woman came demanding that Jesus acknowledge her plight and do something about it. But he ignored her at first. He didn't even bother to answer her. The disciples urged him to send her away. But she kept shouting.

Who knows how long the time was in passing. Was it a few minutes or was it longer? Maybe she yelled at Jesus for a long time until finally he gave her a response. Jesus answered her saying, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In other words I came only to save my people the Jews. But she didn't give up. It would appear that she moved even closer and she knelt before him and she asked again for his help. But Jesus even further insulted her saying, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." He called her a dog and she didn't even attempt to deny it. She responded and she acknowledged what category he had put her in. And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." And in those moments, who knows how long it took him, who knows how long Jesus paused before answering her, Jesus changed his mind. In what appears to be a complete change of direction he responds saying, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish. And her daughter was healed instantly."

As we change our thoughts we change our world. That idea is what's posited here. The Canaanite woman changed Jesus' ministry and mission. She pushed him to search his soul and he

pushed her to search her soul and together something amazing happened. And indeed how important is it for us to grasp that, "Even the Savior of the world had to search his soul." Even the Savior of the world had to change his mind. And so for us and our daily lives the message is perhaps that we too are being called to search our souls and change our minds.

I've been told that in the realm of thought, there are two main categories: thoughts of love and thoughts of fear. And each and every single moment, we will find ourselves choosing between the two. If we think with love, then we're more likely to behave lovingly and to attract love from others. If our hearts are closed, we're more likely to act out of fear. Fear is a kind of chameleon changing the color of its skin and it doesn't always look like fear.... instead it tends to look like anger or jealousy. Fear elicits reactions from others that reflect fear.

I imagine that this Canaanite woman in our Gospel today was somehow able to set aside her fear and instead to illicit from Jesus a response of love. She had to work at it and she could have chosen instead to give up. Who knows how long it took her or under what circumstances she moved from fear to love. It was her life moving in a new direction. Today it is a moment frozen in time for us... A tale of an encounter reminding us that in any moment we too can change our minds.

Being outside today here in nature is an opportunity to remember that God created us to participate within the Divine Spirit and to co-create a world of harmony and peace and joy. And isn't it this authority of love which gives us the power to do so. With every thought, we choose between heaven on earth or hell on earth, both for ourselves and for the world. We have the power to bless or to blame, to forgive or to judge. With our thoughts we have the power to honor or mock, to believe in miracles or to deny the possibility that they ever happen. When

our minds move in accord with love—when we act with forgiveness and prayer even the simplest tender thought—can move mountains.

Is there a situation in your life that causes you pain or anxiety, or fear or grief? Each of us individually and collectively is working towards that same moment the Canaanite woman had. That moment to take our pain, our anxiety, our fear, our grief and to surround it in our minds with light and awareness and then to lift it up to God, ...move in a little closer and put it down at God's feet. Just that simple thought that we can take a situation of darkness and place it in the light, praying for God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves puts into motion a force for good. It is unstoppable and indestructible. It is, in essence, the power of love itself that calls us to ask for help in the changing of our minds. What we cannot do....God can. Amen.

*Excerpted from What You Think Is What You Get By Marianne Williamson and Synthesis*