

August 17, 2020

It is just very, very difficult to help people understand the Gospels as anything but itineraries of Jesus, but they are not, and they are not a catalogue of specific moral teachings, either, but they have been preached, badly for sure, as just that, itineraries of Jesus and moral teachings, even though there is nary a mention of the specifics of those teachings in any of the Gospel stories. Just using the Gospel texts assigned for the last three weeks, you could, if you read them, actually read them and thought about what you read, learn something of what I believe Jesus had in mind when he announced the Good News with the call to repentance and pointed out that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

Prominent in the stories of the hungry crowds that went away full of fish and bread and the stormy night and the sinking Peter is the fact that Jesus withdrew from his disciples and the crowds to pray, "he went up the mountain."

In the third story of the Canaanite woman with the demon afflicted daughter Jesus does not withdraw to pray, but plunges headlong into Tyre and Sidon, marginal places at best, Gentiles, where no good Jewish teacher need go, but without getting in touch with his Father who finds him beloved and a source of pleasure, Jesus goes on his own and acts like a smart ass to that poor woman, ignoring her child, acting totally out of his normal character, just like a bigoted spoiled brat.

It is the woman in that story who has the faith; she believes what Jesus in the story forgot, that she is beloved by Divine Love, God, whatever name you want to use, but she knew in her bones that she was loved, and Jesus forgot that. Jesus forgot because he did not take time to be by himself, alone, with his "Father" who loves him and takes pleasure in him. She shamed him back into belovedness, I think.

In these days, many of us find ourselves alone, and many of us are struggling with that. I am not suggesting any kind of magic fix or rescue from heaven, but withdrawing because we need to, we recognize the need to get back in touch with our own belovedness by remembering without words, our own words, that is, that Divine Love loves us just as Divine Love embraced that Canaanite woman.

Google the psalms, maybe, and do not expect instant gratification or instant relief of your loneliness, but do it, every day for a few minutes; withdraw and go up your mountain, shut your mouth, maybe your eyes, for 15 minutes, and see if you are not a more gentle, less anxious, more generously thinking lover

yourself, even in the absence of those you love; let your heart break if it must, but stick with it.