

Crumbs Under The Table?

This narrative style Eucharist is based on the story of the Syrophenician woman's encounter with Jesus. She is one of my heroes – a woman who finds her voice and dares to challenge Jesus so I know I am taking great liberties with the text here but what might she say to us about her encounter with Jesus if she could?

I don't really know what possessed me
(if you'll excuse the pun)
My daughter is only small
Her life just begun
And she's having seizures and fits
Which are terrifying to watch
My neighbours say
she is possessed by demons
and are too scared to come near us
and my husband has gone to stay with relatives
he'd be so ashamed to know I've come to seek help
and angry to know I have assumed his role
as head of the household
and dared to ask a man for help
and a Jew at that
but I don't know what else to do.

So I threw myself at his feet
Begging him to listen to me
I could see he was relaxing
And taking some time out with his friends
But I didn't expect him to be quite so rude
I know I shouldn't have come
How degrading to ask a Jew for help
But there are rumours flying around
Of how he is a prophet and a teacher
And has healed all sorts of people
He's got a reputation for doing things differently
For crossing the social barriers
For speaking to women of dubious reputation
I guess being a Gentile and a Canaanite
Was just too many taboos for him to break
He was rude, called me and my people dogs
And accused me of taking the children's food
Well, usually I would just have bowed and walked away
But I could see my daughter's face
Etched with bewilderment and fear
And my blood boiled with anger
How dare he call her a dog!
How dare he refuse to help
when I have risked my reputation
How dare he get onto his arrogant, Jewish high-horse
And lecture me on the limits of God's generosity
Something snapped within me

Maybe it was the stirrings of my own faith
Finding their voice
And I retorted back
That even the dogs get to eat the crumbs
that fall under the table.

Well, something I said must have got him thinking
Cause now he's got a reputation
for breaking all kinds of social and religious taboos
the Jewish authorities are up in arms
and even the Romans are getting a bit nervous
It's the night before the inevitable is going to happen
(Well, the Jews are going to silence him sooner or later
And turning over the tables in the temple
And riding into Jerusalem parodying Zechariah's prophecy
was the final straw)
it is the Passover night
a night of Jewish pride and tradition
and Jesus, sits at the table with his closest friends
(and I might add some of the women he'd befriended)
and Jesus, takes the bread, blesses and breaks it
and shares it with them
saying, "This is my body, broken for you" ...
It isn't just the crumbs of creation that are being shared
It is Jesus, himself who is broken for the life of the world
"Do this in remembrance of me"
so each time I knead or bake or eat bread
I remember the man who was broken
For the life of the world.

[break and share bread with the words – the life of the world]

And after supper, he lifted the cup of wine
Blessed it and shared it with them
Saying, "Take, drink, this is the blood of the new covenant
Sealed by my blood" ...
The new covenant, which reaches beyond the Jews
The new covenant, which smashes cultural taboos and barriers
The new covenant where the dogs
no longer get the crumbs that fall from the table
but are invited to sit at the table
and to feast, feast with the one who came to give life.

[share wine with the words – the wine of new life]

Bread and wine,
Crumbs of the basic sustenance of life
Wine of remembrance and celebration.
We have been invited to sit at the table
And feasted on God's life for the world
May we leave this feast to take the invitation
Of God's inclusive love into the world

To break down the barriers of our culture and tradition
And restore the relationship of God's love for all people
In the name of the one who was willing to be challenged and changed.

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