

Sermon- 9/9/2018, God's Work/Our Hands Sunday
Text- Mark 7:24-37

Crumbs or Surf and Turf

Grace and peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Today, on this God's Work/Our Hands weekend we have a lesson that speaks to the issue of Insiders/Outsiders. We'll get to the text in a moment. When I think of being an insider, one of the first things that comes to mind is that of nicknames. Usually, a nickname indicates closeness. It suggests that you are an insider to a group of friends. My nickname growing up was the Big L. I was big and my friends didn't want to say my whole name. So I was the Big L and occasionally just L. Some of my other friends had nicknames like Tony the Nose, or Crazy Feet Al. Tony is obvious, Al couldn't keep his feet still, kind of like Pastor Ruge. Does any body here remember your nickname? (Pastor asks congregation).

Even in my ministry at Our Saviors in Appleton we had nicknames. I was simply call Rev. When we played our bi- monthly poker game, we had Big Al, Upchuck Charlie, and another guy simply called 2 pair. Funny how nicknames stick. A few years ago my mother-in-law tells me that a new person arrived at the Heritage in Appleton and that he wanted to see me. She explained that all he said was that 2 pair wants to see me. I saw him the next day and Ed Masak, aka 2 pair, wanted me to do his funeral. We had the funeral about a year later. The bulletin cover had a poker hand and you guessed it - it showed a poker hand with 2 pair.

Yes. We live having a group that we can describe as Insiders. And as Insiders we are somewhat anxious about the other group, the one we can call outsiders. Growing up, as I described in a previous sermon, all the churches around me were bursting at the seams. Full of Norwegians, Swedes and Germans. But the neighborhood was changing. Blacks, Hispanics, and other outsiders were moving in. The solution was that the Insiders moved. First they moved to Staten Island, then Long Island and finally New Jersey. All trying to get away. Of course now all those churches are empty.

We all know this business about Insiders and Outsiders. Which brings me to the text for the day. It's a story about an outsider. A non-Jew living in Trye, a town in modern day Lebanon. She cries out for help. "Lord have mercy on me, for my

daughter has a demon.” Her cry is actually *Kryie Eleison*, which we use in our liturgy. Lord have mercy, heal my daughter. Jesus says nothing. But his disciples do, they were always trying to protect Jesus from the riffraff of society. They tell her to get lost. For a moment, Jesus seems to be taking their advice when he says that he was to be there for the sons and daughters of Israel. The disciples probably nodded their heads in agreement. But the woman persists even more strongly - Lord Have Mercy- *Kryie Eleison*.

Now comes the nickname. Jesus says, “It’s not right to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs”. The dogs. That’s what the Jews called the non-Jews. It wasn’t a term of endearment. It was a nickname of insult and ridicule. Spic, Whop, Chink, Fag, Retard. It was a term for an outsider. Not sure why Jesus said that. Maybe he was sharing how ridiculous such a term was? Or maybe because he knew what he would do. Teaching moment - always for Jesus. The woman doesn’t give up - “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from the masters table”. And of course, the rest is history.

Jesus, of course does the healing. And in so doing lets the disciples and the folks who were present know that he has come for all people. Insiders and outsiders.

Well we are the inside group. Can’t get much more of an inside group than the ELCA. Today about 9,200 congregations and over 3 million members will be venturing out in their communities, reaching out to that group we call outsiders. We will reach out in love, care and support to let them know we give a darn. We will reach out to all those who cry out, “*Kryie Eleison*.” And we will heal, and share and welcome them in the name of Christ, who never met an outsider he didn’t like.

But here’s the kicker. We are not offering crumbs that fall from our table. We are offering Surf and Turf, Lobster and Filet. We are offering our best. We are reminding all people that they are valued, loved and cared for by a loving God. Not crumbs, but Surf and Turf- the best we have to give. Amen- Let it be so.