

## Pentecost 16(B)

1. **You might recall that in last week's Gospel reading, Jesus confronts the teaching that privileges group identity and group boundaries that exist only to *exclude* those who don't share them.**
  - a. For the church, we identity and our community are not for *our sake alone* – who we are and what we do is part of how God is bringing about the healing of the world
  - b. We practice here in church how we live outside of church – worship being all about learning how to be generous, joyful, forgiving, and peace-making people.
2. **Today, we continue in Mark 7 and the scene shifts to the border regions of Jewish and Gentile territory – what Mark refers to as Tyre – and then to another border region that consisted of ten cities – the Decapolis**
  - a. Two border encounters; two healings; two outsiders being included into the one expanding circle of divine wholeness
  - b. The details of the characters we meet are significant
    - i. First a woman with an ill child; a gentile, a foreigner – a Syrophenician, and seemingly a wealthy resident of what was a wealthy area
    - ii. Second, a man experiencing deafness; perhaps also a gentile and resident of one of Rome's military and economic strongholds
    - iii. Their locations are important – Jesus is operating at the edges of Jewish territory – that is, on the edge of Jewish identity and boundaries . . . and power.
    - iv. And, in both stories, but especially in the first, the healing is not automatic, we might say. There is first interaction, even correction of Jesus, from which healing results.
    - v. Jesus here is not merely a faith healer: these are interventions of divine power into ever expanding regions of activity.
    - vi. The circle of God's healing is widening
3. **Jesus' healing interventions into the border regions provides another layer to questions about our identity and purpose as a Christian community.**
  - a. One of the lessons we can take from the healing stories is that following Jesus can take us into unfamiliar spaces, and in the company of unfamiliar people.
  - b. Now, what image comes to mind when you consider this possibility? Is it some far away country, or some mission field somewhere beyond civilisation?

- c. I dare say, we don't have to go far to be in strange lands with new people – it could be your neighbour's front yard, or some activity sponsored by a local organisation or another faith community.
- d. What count for us as borders might be our own front door

**4. The point is: if as St David's we exist not simply for our own sake – if who we are and what we do here on Sunday is how we learn how to live outside these walls – then following Jesus means joining Jesus beyond our comfort zones, beyond the things we know or even the people we know.**

- a. And in joining Jesus at the many border regions of our lives, we join too in his ministry of healing – it might even be our healing that takes place
- b. The border regions of our lives are often where we experience God in new ways, where our assumptions are challenged, and growth can happen
- c. And rather than think of borders as far away places, we begin by looking where we are located – here in Burnside, and wherever we call home.

**5. Conclusion: God's mission of healing is unfolding at the borders of our social divisions, and at our front door**

- a. As we learn from the healing stories today – healing begins with engagement, learning, listening, and perhaps, a change of heart.
- b. Rushing out to “heal the world” is not what Jesus does – we start by taking steps across the border regions in our lives – and then, seeing who greets us
- c. This is mission – not the heroic kind we might be hearing about – but the small, daily ways we join God at the sites where healing is needed