

Everything in God's Hands Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday,
August 3, 2016 8:15 AM Jer 31:1-7; **Mt 15:21-28** (When we suffer and we are in
pain and when we are sick, this is an opportunity to learn how to depend on God. It's an
opportunity to learn how to pray.)

“Then Jesus said to her in reply, ‘O woman great is your faith!’”

This is one of the cases where **Jesus meets faith outside of the boundaries of Israel.** By Israel we mean in general those who follow the covenant, so not necessarily Jews in the sense of citizens of Judea, but that would include Galileans, but it would not include Sidonites or Tyrians who are outside of the scope of the people of Israel.

Now it is noteworthy that Jesus, a Galilean, feels this prejudice against Sidonians, when in fact Galileans were the object of prejudice by Judeans. So that's the way people are; Jesus was people. He was human. But that's not the general thrust of the story; it's simply a sideline. **The thrust of the story is Jesus' ability to in a word bring healing.**

Now was this girl possessed? That's what the woman says: “tormented by a demon.” Does that mean possessed? Not necessarily. Is there such a thing as being tormented by a demon? Well, yes, there could be. But **there is also a mental condition where people imagine they are being tormented by demons.** There are two people that I have contact with on an irregular basis, but I have had to deal with them, who believe that a demon or demons are tormenting them, whereas in fact they imagine a lot of things. They are what doctors call paranoid. They are **suffering from delusions.** Was this girl suffering from delusions? Possibly. This may not be a story of an exorcism. **It may be the story of the healing of mental illness,** which is really a very different thing. The point is **Jesus is able to bring the healing.** We have to keep that in mind as we deal with mental illnesses. Mental illness is not demonic. It is not a matter of the

Church's rite of exorcism. That wouldn't help; it doesn't help; it's inappropriate, but nonetheless **prayer is important as is faith. And, in a way, only God can heal.**

Now, in a way, **our bodies are made to heal.** We know this. We have these wonderful properties. If you cut your finger and it bleeds, pretty soon it's mending itself. That's a natural process. We have this whole immune system that is meant to expel those bacteria or viruses or whatever grows in us, including even malignancies that are inappropriate, that are not healthy. So we are built to heal. **We are designed to heal. Is our mind designed to heal too? Perhaps, we know less about that.**

But we know there are many things that obstruct healing, and especially it's true of mental problems. **There are many ways in which people make their own mental case worse.** This is a case of making it better. Prayer and faith help. Ultimately the healing takes place whenever it takes place. Do medicines help? They can, not always though. In regard to any disease we are really in the hands of God. **We are in the hands of God in regard to everything.** Doctors help, and they should, and their art and their science is something very wholesome. Medicine can be very wholesome, or it can have all sorts of negative results as well. But in everything we are in God's hands. And this is what the story is trying to get us to see. Whoever we are: faithful, not faithful, good, bad, indifferent, we are in God's hands. **And when we suffer and we are in pain and when we are sick, this is an opportunity to learn how to depend on God. It's an opportunity to learn how to pray.** But it always requires a certain kind of patience. **Jesus here takes the authority and decides this is the time,** this is the moment: your daughter will get better, right now. **He does not give that authority to anyone else.** That is always his, and that we have to keep in mind.