

Aloha! This is Sunny Ahn, the senior pastor at Kona United Methodist Church. We have come together this morning for two main reasons. First and foremost is to honor our Lord Jesus Christ with our worship. The other is to honor our mothers, our grandmothers, and all women of faith who have nurtured us. These are lifetime tasks, neither of which can be confined to the worship service we are having now.

It is a day for greetings, a day of expressions of love. It is also a day for remembering...remembering how blessed we are to have our mothers and all women of faith who have nurtured us.

On this Mother's Day, I would like to acknowledge our mothers by naming the things a mother would do within a day through the voice of Anita Renfro. She talks very fast. So, please buckle up and listen what she has to say. Ready? Here she is:

**Video/Audio: ["Momisms (The Mom Song)"; 2:58]**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxjLVyYiIgM>

Aren't they amazing? Being a mom is not easy! And so today, it is very appropriate and right to pause and say "Thank You" to our mothers and all those women of faith who have nurtured us, and to honor them, and thank God for them. Let us shout out, "Thank You!" Ready? 1-2-3... (*hear the shout*) I hope you shouted out, and you really meant it.

On the other hand, I know that Mother's Day can be a very difficult day for some of us for lots of different reasons. Maybe your mother is no longer alive, and you really miss her. Or maybe you don't have a very good relationship with your mother. Or maybe you'd love to be a mother, and that just has not happened. So, if Mother's Day is a painful day for you, I would like to assure you that God understands, and He cares deeply about that. And my prayer for you is that you would have a divine encounter while you are worshiping with us today like the encounter Jesus had with a woman in today's scripture.

This woman was a mother, who was burdened about her young daughter who is sick. In the Gospels, the daughter is described as being demon-possessed, and no further explanation is given whether that was a physical distress that she was

manifesting (probably it was), and probably also some kind of psychological side effects associated with that. It's not the disease itself. It's not the affliction itself. It's the burden of this mother we are talking about here today.

She's concerned about her little girl. Some of us might resonate with what this mother is going through. Many of us have been there, if not all of us. We have had those nights in which we could not sleep, nights in hospital, nights contemplating yet another surgery, nights in which we didn't know which way to turn, nights filled with worry—worry over what may happen, worry over what may eventuate. It's a familiar scene, isn't it?

Personally, reading this scripture brings me a memory of my mother who had many sleepless nights at my hospital bedside. Some of you have heard about my 2-years of hospitalization when I was six years old in Korea. Many nights I saw my mom right at my hospital bedside. After two years of trying to figure out the cause of my pain, the medical team gave up on me....but not my mom...and not my God also.

My mom took me to a prayer mountain dealing my life with the Lord. In Korea, many churches have a little house up in the mountain for the sake of praying & healing which is called "Prayer Mountain." Anyway, like the concerned mother in today's scripture, my mom clung to Jesus for her young daughter in prayer day and night for a while, and finally her daughter was healed.

Do you notice as we read today's scripture how difficult Jesus was for this concerned mom? She comes with this burden, this heart-rending burden for her daughter says, "Have mercy on me, Jesus!" But, Jesus ignores her. He says not a word. Have we ever been ignored? Or do you feel ignored by God in your quarantine life these days?

Imagine this. This is Jesus we're talking about now, and He ignores this concerned mother. He says not a word. So, she goes to Plan B. Remember this—Mothers never give up on her children. They do whatever they can for their children. The Plan B is asking the disciples. And what do the disciples say? Well, they go to Jesus and they say, "Send her away. She's just being a nuisance. She's making all this noise and commotion. We can barely think. Lord, send her away!"...meaning, "She's not one of us." And then Jesus says, "I am just for the people of Israel." Now that's true, of course. He had come for the Jews; He had come for His people.

Now His people rejected Him, of course, but He had come, first of all, for the Jews. And she kneels. She falls down upon her knees, and she says to Jesus, “Lord, help me. Help me, Jesus!” And you think now the heart of Jesus would be broken, but He says, “It is not right to cast the children’s bread and give it to dogs.” Wow! It takes my breath away! If this was not in the Bible, some of you would say I was making this up! But, this is Jesus!

Do you notice what she does when Jesus says, “It is not right to cast the children’s bread and give it to the dogs.”? She agrees. She doesn’t take the hump. She doesn’t get all ae-rated. She doesn’t throw a tantrum. She doesn’t throw—what you call it?—a hissy fit. She says, ‘Yes, Lord. Okay. But even the dogs may eat of the crumbs that fall from the master’s table.’ She agrees with Him.

Cyril of Alexandria, one of the theologians from the early church, once said, “We should so pray so as to make God ashamed if He doesn’t answer us.” Wow, that’s a very bold statement, isn’t it? We should so pray as to make God ashamed if He doesn’t answer us. I think that’s what this concerned mother in today’s scripture is doing. It’s almost as though she’s saying to Jesus, ‘Shame on you if you don’t answer my plea!’ When she gets down on her knees and she begs Him, ‘Lord, have mercy on me! And shame on You if you don’t.’

You know, it’s hard to know how much she knew about Jesus. Not as much as you, I think. Perhaps, she had heard of Him somewhere. She didn’t have a Bible. She knew nothing of the New Testament. She knew nothing of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone apart from the works of the law. But she knew this: the answer to her problem, the answer to her predicament lay in one person, and in one person alone. There was only one who could answer her predicament. It was Jesus.

It was this one, standing right in front of her there and then. And no matter what the obstacles, no matter what the difficulties, she persevered. She would not take NO for an answer. She believes, you see, however small the evidence might seem to be. And Jesus says of her, ‘You are a woman of great faith.’

You see, this passage is saying to us...well, in the first place it’s a rebuke to those of us who are Christians. It’s a rebuke for what is often our prejudice about people who are not like us, and not of us...from a different race, who smell, whose clothes are funny, who speak with a funny accent and we dismiss them. And tell me if this is not so: tell me that we don’t say with the disciples from time to time, ‘Lord, send

them away. Send them away, because they are just a nuisance.’ Do we hear this shout anywhere in church? “Send them away!!” Whenever I hear this ugly shout coming out of the church, I repent on their behalf and ask for forgiveness. With this shout, I feel like we grieve the Holy Spirit more than anyone else.

But today’s passage is teaching something else also. It’s saying this: Anyone can come to Jesus and find mercy—ANYONE. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). That’s Jesus’ word for us this morning.... “Come to me!”

Maybe some of us are concerning about something or someone so deeply just like the concerned mother in today’s scripture. If you are one of those this morning, please hear our Lord, Jesus Christ. He says, “Come to me. Bring your burden, bring your trial, bring your tribulations, bring the sense that no one understands you, and come to me and you will find in me a friend who sticks closer to you than a brother.” You’ll find in Jesus everything...everything...forgiveness of sins, a new life, new fellowship, new vitality, a sense of life that you’ve never had before.

Come to Jesus like the concerned mother came to Jesus in the Bible. Against all kinds of obstacles, she would not hear NO. And you’ll find, my friend, the open arms of Jesus saying, “Come, come to me.” Let it be so. Amen.