Disruptive Spirit, open our minds as we seek understanding this day. Open also our hearts that we might share the light and love of Christ with all in this troubled world. AMEN

In the past year, we’ve talked a lot about Jesus. The kind of man he was, the kind of saviour he was.

-we know well the Christ who loved, who had compassion for his fellow human beings.

-we know deeply the Christ who teaches us how we might be in right relationship with, not just God, but with one another

The Jesus we don’t know so well, though we’ve talked about on occasion, is the man, the son of a carpenter.

-but even if we don’t know the human Christ terribly well, we assume much about his character.

-like the divine Christ, we assume that the human Jesus represents the best way of being human. As though he doesn’t suffer from the same setbacks that we have

-we assume him to be calm and gentle. Patient and without prejudice

-when we look at our own lives, we would be lying if we couldn’t pick out times when we were more volatile, when we were short with those we loved or even those we didn’t know.

-we’d be fooling ourselves if part of our coming up in the world didn’t include some prejudice about our neighbours, whether its racism, elitism, believing that “those people” whoever those people might be, are all a certain way.

-but part of our maturing, both in life and in faith, has meant setting aside those long held prejudices, seeing people for who they are as a person, and not labelling them based on how we think they should be

-and maybe we do this because of our faith, because we have always seen Christ to be the open and embracing person that we would have ourselves be someday.

The truth is that that Jesus we expect, the Christ we’ve come to know, wasn’t always embracing, and inclusive, completely without prejudice.

-he grew up in a world where people believed that some groups were just plain better than others, more deserving than other

-it was a part of his parents’ world, and knowing the influence that a parent has on our lives, we must accept that it became a part of Jesus’ world as well

Then enter today’s Gospel reading. Jesus was going around teaching in the region known as Tyre.

-trying to escape the crowds, he entered a house. But as the reading said, he could not remain hidden

-a Syrophoenician woman with a sick and dying daughter found him out and came to him, begging for his blessing

Now this is where our expectations often kick in. We assume that Jesus, who just loves healing and helping people, would do something amazing and awe inspiring and heal this woman’s daughter.

-but how could he? This was a Syrophoenician woman. What a dirty people, less than people even. What dogs these Syrophoenicians were.

-dogs, not worthy of the food on the children’s plate.

-this is Jesus talking here. The compassionate Christ, the loving companion, the great embracer, and he’s likening this woman, no not just this woman but her whole people, to dogs

-now yes, with some clever back and forth the Syrophoenician woman convinced Jesus that the dogs can at least eat the crumbs, and yes Jesus does eventually heal her daughter, but why did we take this winding road to get here?

Some will suggest that Jesus always intends to heal the child, but is in fact offering a teachable moment, that all people are worthy of God’s love, not just the Israelites.

-but who is he teaching? His disciples? The great crowd he had recently escaped.

-no, all we have in this house as far as the passage suggests, is Jesus and a Syrophoenician woman

-well no, that’s not entirely true, taking up most of the house would be the prejudice handed down to Christ regarding Syrophoenicians

It might be hard to accept, but if we acknowledge Jesus Christ as wholly divine and wholly human, then we can accept that sometimes, Jesus was a jerk.

-like us, like anyone, he grew up hearing stories of prejudice from his parents, or on the playground, or in the news of the day

-he was taught that Syrophoenicians weren’t people, that they were dogs, unworthy of his care or compassion

-this is not the Jesus we expect, this is not the Christ that we know, and yet there he is

Now the news isn’t all bad, because, just like us, Jesus learned here to overcome his prejudice and help.

-and thus the Christ who accepted all regardless of who they were or where they come from was born.

So why does this matter to us? Why is talking about Christ overcoming his own prejudices an important piece of scripture that we need to hear, today? What does a woman crying to Christ about her dying child have to do with us today?

-because Syrian children are dying and their mothers are weeping at the loss. Because refugees are screaming for help on a sinking boat. Because the world is treating them like dogs

-we talk about the Jesus that we didn’t expect in today’s reading, because as Christians we are taught that Christ offered his hand freely to anyone who needed it. In most cases he doesn’t ask if they deserve it, and the one time he does, he is made humble because of his inherited arrogance

Those who would have us stay out of issues like this ask things like, if the boat was so dangerous why get in, for all that is good why put your children in if that boat isn’t safe?

-but the real question we have to ask, not them but ourselves, the question that many are asking this week is this, how dangerous is the country they are running from

-we can’t grasp that, at least many of us struggle to, because we don’t live in fear of being taken in the night, no questions no charges.

-we don’t live in the reality where we have to hide who we are so that we aren’t shot in the street

-we don’t live in a country where putting our children on a leaky boat is safer than the country we call home

As I’m sure was the case for many of you, images of children washing up on the beach was prominent either in your facebook feeds or on the news.

-as I scrolled and saw image after image, I also saw the accompanying comments of people

-some said “those people” need to stop fighting, others said thank God I live in Canada

-but the comment that made me stop, made me realize that we aren’t the people that Christ, that God expects us to be was this, “I get that it’s bad, but do we really need pictures of dead kids filling up our feed”

-yes. Because just as the Syrophoenician woman ran to Christ about her dying daughter, who would not be silenced, who would not be turned away, we cannot allow the cries of those children to go unheard, their plight unseen

Along with the tragic pictures of children on the beach, and parents weeping, there was another image, a comic strip that captured what our world is facing.

-it had four men in a boat, 2 at the front and 2 at the back

-the back of the boat had a hole and so the 2 men at the back were bailing water like crazy.

-the 2 men at the front of the boat simply sat, and watched and said, thank God we aren’t on that end of the boat.

-the world is sinking, and as created beings, we are bound to one another by the words found in proverbs, “The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all”, and because of that bond we are to heal, clothe, feed, and embrace our neighbours, both near and far

Now all of this isn’t meant to guilt us into action. Rather it should be a reminder to us that our call as Christians is to mend a broken world, through prayer and through action, we are called to be bearers of the light.

But all this talk about refugees, and the Christ we know and have come to know reminds me of one other story.

-it’s the story of a young woman, her husband and their newborn child. Their countries government feared rebellion and the rise of a new leader, and so the military set about killing the children of their people

-fearing for their newborn’s life, this new family fled their home country and became refugees in the country of Egypt

-that child grew up and in time returned home bringing with him a message of love, compassion, and justice seeking

As we welcome the refugee Christ into our heart, let us do no less with the children of God fleeing in fear, seeking in hope a new home where they can be safe. AMEN