

Eight Essential Bible Stories
Living the Message 2024-2025
December 2024 Study Guide
Mount Olivet Lutheran Church

December: Mark 7 – God became one of us. Really! with Pastor Lose

[Click here to watch the video.](#) Or use vimeo.com/1035002393

Opening Prayer

Dear God, bless each one who comes to this study. Open our ears, hearts, and minds so that we may experience your presence in our lives more deeply as we learn how you have been present to your people in ages past. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Focus Statement

Most of us associate December with all-things-Christmas, and so it's only natural to take up a beloved Christmas story for December's Living the Message: *Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman* found in Mark 7:24-30. Wait! You don't think of this as a Christmas story.? Or, maybe you're not sure you've ever heard of this story? Or have no idea what "Syrophenician" is? Or are at least pretty sure you have no Christmas ornament depicting this strange, even off-putting encounter? Well... you're not alone. In fact, when I shared this story at a recent staff meeting, one of our longest serving staff members asked, "How can I be 60 years old and never have heard of this story before?!?" But as we dig into this story with care, we'll quickly realize it really is about Christmas or, at least, about the central affirmation of the faith that Christmas represents: that in Jesus, God – eternal creator and sustainer of the cosmos – became fully and really human. During this December *Living the Message* session, we will learn about the story of a courageous woman; a genuinely human messiah; a missing, or at least misunderstood, part of the Creed; and more!

Questions

1. What was one of your initial takeaways from Pastor Lose's presentation?
2. **Incarnation** (literally, "to take on our flesh") is at the heart of our Christmas celebrations. Read the second article of the Nicene Creed and think about/discuss how it illustrates the concept of incarnation:

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, **true God from true God**, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and **became truly human**. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the*

scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

3. Discuss/consider the idea that God is truly God and truly human. Is that difficult for you? How so? (*Does it help to know that it took the church three centuries to agree on the concept of truly God and truly human written about in the Nicene Creed?*)

4. Read **The Story of the Syrophenician Woman** – [Mark 7:24-30](#)

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

5. What do you notice about Jesus in this story?
6. How does this story help highlight the true humanity *and* the true divinity of Jesus?
7. How human will we let Jesus be?
8. How does this exclamation from Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (found in both Mark 15, Matthew 27) exemplify the incarnation for us?

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for loving us enough to become one of us, taking on our lot and life so that we might live with hope. Amen.

Next Month

Genesis 3 – God will not give up on us.

In-person: Tuesday, January 7, 6:30-7:30pm, Minneapolis Campus Room 207

Video will be emailed out Monday, January 6

Questions?

Katie Stevenson, Coordinator of Adult Education katies@mtolivet.org | 612.767.2232