

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 11TH-12TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

PUPPIES, CRUMBS, AND THE MASTER'S TABLE (MATTHEW 15:21-28)

After Jesus' confrontation with Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, He and His disciples now move outside of Jewish territory altogether.

- Tyre & Sidon was the epitome of Gentile "uncleanness" to many Jews (vs. 21).
- These two cities were frequently condemned by OT prophets as enemies of Israel (Isaiah 23, Jeremiah 25)- Jesus is now entering into this "unclean" region to be around "unclean" people.

Of all the Gentiles, those of Canaanite descent would've been the most hated by the Jews.

- The Canaanites were one of the nations Israel was instructed to wipe out when they entered the Promised Land (Deut. 7:1-2).
- Jezebel, one of the most wicked queens in the history of Israel, was a Canaanite from the town of Sidon (1 Kings 16:31).

And yet, as Jesus enters this region, He is met by a Canaanite woman who addresses Him as "Lord" three times and uses the Messianic title, "Son of David" (vs. 22).

- Most significantly, she comes desperately asking for something she knows she doesn't deserve- mercy.
- She's in great need of this mercy because she has a daughter who is oppressed by a demon.

No one who asks Jesus for mercy will ever be turned away- but initially, Jesus strangely ignores this woman.

- Is He testing her? Is He allowing her persistence to sink in?
- Maybe He responded the way He did not to destroy her faith, but to develop it.
- She persisted so loudly that the disciples were annoyed and urged Jesus to send her away.

Jesus finally stopped and gave a reason for why He shouldn't honor her request- He'd come only for the "lost sheep of Israel" (vs. 24).

- And yet, here He was in Gentile territory encountering a Canaanite woman who sees Him as Messiah, Lord, & savior.
- It's almost as if He's going overboard to emphasize the contrast between this "unclean" gentile's faith and the arrogance and lack of faith from the Pharisees.

This woman comes close to Jesus and knelt to worship Him as Lord, as Jesus responds by telling her that it's not right to, "take the children's bread and throw it to dogs" (vs. 26).

- Her response is that even dogs eat crumbs that fall under the table (vs. 27).
- Jesus' response could be misunderstood that He's insulting this woman by calling her a "dog", an unclean animal in Judaism.

However, the term He uses is the diminutive "kunarion"(puppy)-it's an image from her world, for only Gentiles kept dogs as pets.

- Jesus is gently pushing her away so He can, "feed the children" (Israel), and yet, like a charming, endearing puppy she still persists to be fed.
- She's not asking Him to violate His program that for the moment is focused on Jews- she's only asking for leftover crumbs.

Jesus commends her faith, calling her "woman", which is probably more closely translated as, "my dear" (vs. 28).

- The healing of her daughter happens offstage, because the miracle isn't really the point.
- The point is the persistent, desperate faith of the Gentile woman who asks for what she knows she doesn't deserve... AND the generosity, kindness, and goodness of Jesus in response to this kind of faith.

So often we can become so entitled- thinking that God owes us something or that we deserve blessings, answers and miracles from Him.

- But the truth is, the only thing we really deserve from God is hell- and yet, God is gracious, compassionate, kind, and generous.
- The kind of faith He honors is humble, yet persistent and puts more stock in His goodness than it does our own worthiness.

HEALINGS (MATTHEW 15:29-31)

Jesus traveled most likely down the east side of the Sea of Galilee into more Gentile territory around the Decapolis.

- Choosing the mountainside, He sat down in the posture of a teacher (vs. 29).
- Because of His widespread reputation, great crowds to Him came bringing their lame, blind, crippled, mute, and many others who were sick (vs. 30), and He healed them.

This crowd is most likely made up of Gentiles- they're pagans who most likely believed in the many gods of Roman/Greek culture.

- When they saw Jesus healing the sick, they "praised the God of Israel." (vs. 31).
- They probably never doubted that the God of Israel existed, but after seeing Jesus healing in His name they praised Him as superior to all the other gods.

It's significant to note the contrast between these Gentiles and the Jewish leaders who knew the OT Scriptures.

- These Gentiles saw the miracles of Jesus and glorified Israel's God, but the Jewish leaders saw them and said Jesus was filled with Satan (Matt. 12:22-24).
- Once more we see the importance of the heart in receiving the seed of God's truth and work. Hearts that are hardened by stubbornness, pride, rebellion, sin, and unbelief apparently don't even notice when God shows up and works miracles in their midst.
- But hearts that are desperate, hungry, and know they're not worthy of God's blessing are the ones who are the most receptive when God shows up.
- "God cares for the humble, but He keeps His distance from the proud." (Psalm 138:6).

4,000 FED (MATTHEW 15:32-39)

This crowd that had drawn near to Jesus spent three days with Him, even though they had nothing to eat (vs. 32).

- They're desperate just to be near Him and He's stayed with them for three days healing, loving, and touching them with compassion and mercy.
- So Jesus expresses to His disciples His compassion for this crowd's hunger (vs. 32).

After Matthew's record of Jesus feeding 5,000, it's baffling and a little bit humorous how the disciples could have questioned Him the way they did in vs. 35.

- Did they really think Jesus was unable to perform the same miracle again?
- Perhaps- or maybe, they believed something much different that revealed something even darker in their hearts.

Maybe they assumed that Jesus would only perform a mass feeding miracle among Jews- they might have thought the symbolism of the messianic banquet applied only to Israel.

- His disciples are having a difficult time accepting and believing that Jesus was also for ethnicities and nations that weren't Jewish.
- However they arrived there, it wasn't the agenda of Christ, and it needed to change.

So Jesus performs a powerful miracle to demonstrate that His plan is for people in all places, from "every tribe, people and tongue" (Rev. 7:9).

- When Jesus asks how many loaves they have, they respond, "Seven...and a few small fish", and then the pattern is repeated again- the people sit down, Jesus blesses the food, and it's distributed amongst the people (vs. 35-36).

This miracle of Jesus' perfect provision and blessing to 4,000 Gentiles is almost identical to His miracle of provision amongst 5,000 Jews.

- The only difference is that when the disciples pick up the leftovers, they come up seven "spyris" (a man-sized basket) as opposed to the 12 "kophinous" (hand-baskets) that were leftover for the disciples in Matt. 14:20 (vs. 37).
- The miracle in the 1st feeding was perfect provision, the miracle in 2nd was abundance.

It's almost as if Jesus is saying through this miracle, "Not only am I willing to provide for and bless those who are not Jewish, there is ALWAYS more than enough of my grace for any who would come to my table".

- This miracle preaches a sermon on generosity of God's grace!
- It is given to those who are undeserving. It is given in abundance.

God's grace is not just for religious people who grew up in church and know the right phrases and rules.

- It is extended freely and in abundance to all people of all ages, ethnicities, and nationalities because of the goodness and kindness of God- not because of anything anyone could ever do to earn it. Jesus' generosity challenges our mindsets.

G.R.A.C.E.- "GOD'S RICHES AT CHRIST'S EXPENSE"

The Greater Point. God Doesn't Play Favorites.

- How would your relationship with God change if you allowed yourself to believe that He loves you regardless of your performance?
- How would your relationship with others change if you started viewing your prejudice and unmerited judgment of them as sin?
- When's the last time you reached out to someone different than you to share the love and truth of Jesus Christ?