

Christ and the woman of Canaan

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] We are going to begin our service with the singing of the first Psalm.

Psalm 1, that man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way, nor sitteth in the scornish chair, but places his delight upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never, and all he doth shall prosper well.

The wicked are not so, but like they are unto the chaff which wind drives to and fro. In judgment therefore shall not stand such as ungodly are, nor in the assembly of the just shall wicked men appear.

For why? The way of godly men unto the Lord is known, whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown.

[1 : 16] Psalm 1, that man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray.

Psalm 1, that man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray.

The way of wicked men shall be in cancer, who walketh not astray.

In cancer of the godly men, nor stands in sinners' way.

Nor sit in sinners' way, nor sit in sinners' way.

[2 : 27] The way of wicked men shall be in cancer. The way of wicked men shall be in cancer. The way of wicked men shall be in cancer, who walketh not astray.

God's good foretenth on this shooting and night he shall be like a free like those near planted by a river.

When in her sea sun yields his fruit, and gives me faith and air.

And all in us come prosper well, the wicked and lost soul.

The light they are brought to the child, which with Christ to unproved.

[4 : 22] In judgment they more shall not stand, search as the glory are.

Nor in us simply of the just, shall wicked men appear.

For by the veil of God we pay, unto the Lord is born, where as the will of wicked men shall by the overgrown.

Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. O Lord our God, enable us to draw near, and to acknowledge before you that you are indeed our God.

That our worship would be wholehearted, and that we would come acknowledging in the first instance that you are worthy to receive our praise and our thanksgiving.

[6 : 18] that you are a God who is God of the universe. God who is God over all. That you are not like the many gods that are in this world.

There is an infinite number of them. And yet the very fact of their number reminds us of the fact that some were there and they are no longer to be found.

Some will be here and the day will come when they will no longer be remembered. The creators are the creatures of the dust.

And as they perish, so shall the memory of that which they created. But you are a God who has no beginning and you have no end.

You are the only living and true God. You have life within yourself and you owe your origin to no one but yourself.

[7 : 32] We acknowledge that even this is a mystery. When we think of the passion of your son Jesus Christ.

He is one with you. He is your son and he is your son from all eternity. He is eternally begotten. And he is the recipient of your favour even as your son.

And yet he is one with you in nature. He is divine as you are divine. He is the saviour of sinners as you have entrusted that labour to him.

And we give thanks that within the economy of the Godhead there is a division and yet there is unity. And we marvel at the scripture that reveals that to us.

And we acknowledge our inability to appreciate the truth that the scripture brings to our attention. But we give thanks that you are patient with us and long suffering.

[8 : 54] And that where we are distracted by the things that this world suggests to us. Our denials of the existence of the divine being. That influences exerted upon us that may cause us to ponder and wonder when in reality they should be dismissed from our thinking.

That we bless you and thank you that no matter the wisdom of man. You are the only wise God. And that there is a wisdom that belongs to you that man cannot fathom.

You are righteous in the way that we do not possess righteousness but derive righteousness from you as its source.

You are holy in the way that we are not. And any holiness or desire to be holy comes from yourself. And we give thanks that all the attributes that are divine which we cannot possess and yet which you present to us as that which should fulfill our lives from on high.

And we give thanks that that which we cannot possess. You hold them out to us as the things that you possess.

[10 : 27] The things that we can possess that you encourage us to aspire to possess them and to wrestle so as to make them out possession.

You want us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the graces that he bestows upon us are not ours in fullness but they are ours in promise.

And we can grow in them. And we can mature. We can be more loving. We can be more understanding. We can be more compassionate. We can be many things that we are not. And you encourage us in the direction that these things take us in. Knowing that the day will come when your people will be like you.

We pray that you would remember all who belong to you this day. Visit them in mercy. Remind them of who you are and what you are to them.

Guide them in the truth that the truth may make them full. And that they may see your word as a spring, as a well of life for them out of which they can draw. We pray that you would remember all who belong to you this day. We pray that you would remember all who belong to you this day. Visit them in mercy. Find them in mercy. Remind them of who you are and what you are to them.

[11 : 36] Guide them in the truth that the truth may make them full. And that they may see your word as a spring, as a well of life for them out of which they can draw.

We pray that you would remember all who are under your hand in sickness this day. Those who are confined to beds in their homes or in hospitals or in care homes.

We pray that you would remember them. In this time of pandemic, we pray for those that have been touched by it. Some who grieve over the loss of loved ones.

Some who are struggling for life itself in the hands of others in hospitals and even within their homes. We pray that you would remember the sin sick world that loses sight of the one who is God over all.

And to whom we can come with our needs and with our petitions. We crave your mercy and we acknowledge that we do not deserve the least of these mercies.

[12 : 50] We pray that you would bless the gospel and bless the preaching of your word. Bless those you have sent out with it that they may proclaim Christ as the holy saviour of sinners.

Where salvation is needed. Where salvation is needed. And all who are in this sin sick world are in need of redemption. Because we have fallen in our first parents.

And we have added to the sin that was theirs with our own. And we have brought ourselves into condemnation. We have brought ourselves to the place where we are worthy to be cast aside.

And we pray that you would mercifully bring us to yourself. That we may learn from you. That we may yield ourselves to your guiding hand upon us.

We remember all who govern us in various parliaments. We remember the royal household. We remember the nations of the earth and all who belong to these nations.

[13 : 53] Especially we remember the third world countries. That they too might be recipients of your grace. When the western world is struggling and striving for survival.

What is it like for those who have the meanest of medical care. And who have little by way of resources to deal with the evil that has been brought upon us.

So hear our prayers on behalf of others. Remember all that we leave to your care. Thankful that we can bring our cares and concerns into your presence even today.

Continue with us the short while we are gathered around your word. Remembering every place that people are met in your name. Preserve their life and ensure that they will escape any harm.

And remember our communities. Remember our homes and families. We pray for the community of Barra. And we pray for all affected there by the virus.

[14 : 59] We pray that you would visit them in mercy. In the truth of the gospel being forcibly brought to their attention.

That they may look unto Jesus. Who is the alone saviour of sinners. We pray for our congregations and our communities. We pray that you would bless the congregation of Carapostus.

It begins a new era in its experience as a Church of Christ. We pray for your servant Ian Thompson as he takes his place as the pastor of that congregation.

Bless those who will uphold him in prayer and minister to them through him. Hear us now and continue with us. Pardoning every sin in Jesus name.

Amen. We are going to hear the word of God as we have it in the gospel of Jesus Christ according to Matthew. Chapter 15 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?

[16 : 15] For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother. And he that curses father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me.

And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. You hypocrites!

Well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips.

But their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand.

[17 : 26] Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knows thou then that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this thing?

But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let him alone.

They be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast into the draught?

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

[18 : 42] These are the things which defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.

My daughter is grievously vexed with the devil. And he answered, But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came, and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.

But he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

But he answered and said, It is not me to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

[19 : 49] Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet.

And he healed them, insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to behold, the lame to walk, and the blind to see.

And they glorified the God of Israel. And so on. May the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word unto his name be the praise.

When we read through this section of Matthew's Gospel, we see how the Lord Jesus deals with those that flock to hear him.

[21 : 13] And it is plain, as many of the commentators point out, that they come to Jesus with preconceived notions and ideas of how Jesus ought to behave and what he should be doing.

And we find that Jesus has to overturn many of their assumptions.

And the Pharisees and scribes come to him. And they are finding fault with the disciples because they are not observing the tradition of the fathers.

And Jesus has to remind them of the true nature of cleanliness. A number of other things we find there that Jesus has to deal with.

And his words of instruction are important. We know that this is part of the problem of men and women.

[22 : 39] That they come to the Lord with ideas. Ideas that are all their own. And they expect the Lord to conform to these ideas.

They have notions as to what Christ is going to be like. And how he is going to deal with them.

We want to look today at this woman who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. And she petitions the Lord on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter.

And Jesus has for a time been followed by crowds. And inevitably that may well have had an overwhelming effect upon him.

We read in the Gospel of Mark. In the same area of teaching. Mark seems to indicate that he was desiring solitude.

[23 : 56] A break away from this incessant pursuit of him. We read there in Mark's Gospel. From thence he arose.

And went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And entered into a house. And would have no man know it. But he could not be hid.

In the wisdom and providence of God there was going to be an encounter with yet another person. Who sought him earnestly.

And who would benefit from the way that Christ dealt with her. The passage of Christ. This is a passage that speaks about faith.

And its genuineness. And its operation. Which can sometimes be misleading. When we think about faith. When we think about faith.

[24 : 56] And when we think about how faith works. God has much to teach us. Which we are difficult. And we are difficult pupils. How was this faith revealed?

Or how was it demonstrated in this passage? The second thing that we want to notice is that. Once that faith was revealed.

That Jesus saw to it. That this faith was tested. And the third thing that we have here. Is that. With the reality of that faith.

Being revealed. That there is. A reward. There is a fruit of it. To be seen.

Where then do we see this. Belayed faith. That. Often. That seems to be the case.

[26 : 00] That when Jesus. Is teaching us. Regarding faith. In the experience of those who. Come to him.

It is found. It is found. Very often. In the most unexpected places. Matthew. Calls this woman. A woman of Canaan. Mark.

Tells us that she was. A Greek. Syro-Phoenician. So she was. Not a Jew. But a Gentile.

And her. Forbearers. Had been traditional enemies. Of the Jews. And. Their. The relationship. That was. Between these two groups. Was. Tense.

To say the least. The second thing. We see. Is that. When she approached Jesus. It is plain. From how she addresses him. That she had learned. Who he was. And that she believed. The truth concerning him.

[26 : 57] She called. Jesus. By the name. Lord. The son of David. And. The name. Of David. And. The name. The name.

Of David. And. The name. The name. Of David. And. The name. Of David. And. The name. Of David.

It shows. That. She. Had. A. A. Knowledge. Of the scripture. The title. She gave. To him.

Was. A messianic. Title. And. Usually. Only. The faithful. Would. Use. That. And.

Especially. Only. Those. Who. Believed. Jesus. To be. As. That. It. Would.

[27 : 52] Appear. That. Not. Only. Did. She. Address. Him. As. King. But.

Also. The. Divine. King. She. Gives. Him. And. When. When. We.

Think. Of. What. She. Is. To. That. Is. To. Who. To.

Who. Who. Who. Who. He. Can. Fulfill. The. Requests. Of. Who.

petition. Him. her plea would be meaningless if that were not the case. It encapsulates the fact that she does not deserve her petition to be received. It also reminds us or teaches us of her other dependence upon him to hear her and it also presupposes her hope that he be of our disposition to answer her in accordance with her need. There is much in the way that she presents herself to him that teaches us about the relationship of faith. We ought to know where to go and we ought to know how to come.

[29 : 33] We ought to understand that in our petitions, if they are offered in accordance with our understanding of what they should be, if they are offered in the right place to the right person, that we do well.

We ought to know who to go to. We ought to know why we need to go to him. And we ought to know how to go and what to expect. And that is what the scripture tells us. That's the scripture teaching us the wisdom of coming to God in order for him to answer our prayers, coming to him with our needs and knowing that he has the ability to meet our needs in ways that no other can. Yet too many people, they, to their shame, even when they are taught this from the scripture, don't come. They don't present themselves before God and they don't seek out his mercy. And their shame is accentuated by those who do come, who, to all intents and purposes, have very few of the privileges that others may have had. If we apply that to ourselves, many of us as growing up in a Christian community, having heard at first hand from Christians who know the Lord, the wisdom of coming to the Lord and seeking from his hand the mercy that we undoubtedly need. And yet we choose not to do that.

And then there are others who have little of these privileges, who have enjoyed the blessing of God's grace. The second thing is that we see that Christ recognised her faith.

But it seems quite plain that although he recognises her faith, he chooses to test it in the first instance.

He answered her not a word, which seems strange. But wherever there is faith, it has to be tested, because the testing is what increases it. The testing is what strengthens us. It is always possible for weak faith to become strong faith.

[32 : 30] And even where there is strong faith, it is possible for it to become stronger still. The first test is seen in the way that Jesus chooses not to answer her. And there is, I don't think, any Christian who has not experienced a trial of this kind. When they are coming to God and pleading with God, God seems not to hear and seems unwilling to answer. That silence is at times something that tries the best.

God is not to say that. And yet we are encouraged to continue to come. And again we see here the same trial continued. The disciples, they speak against her. His disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she cryeth after us.

And it is strange that that is the source of her test. And yet, very often, in the experience of some who come seeking the Lord, God, these are the things that they experience. Sometimes the heavens are barred against them. And the people of God show them no encouragement.

And it is sad that they are the same. And it is sad that they are the case. It is not right that they be like that. But Christ, in his wisdom, permits it in this case.

Too often the Spirit prevailed in their midst, as if only a certain select few were allowed to seek him out. And that is the way it is with many of us. We think we know who is suitable for being one of the disciples of Christ.

[34 : 56] Who is destined to be a follower? We have a picture in our mind of those who would make poor followers and therefore people who should not be encouraged.

That should never be the case. They were so wrong in their understanding of what their Lord and Master was doing. We must always beware of fitting our own construction upon God's dealings with anyone in providence.

However, again, the followers of Christ, he follows their harsh words with his own, which may even appear harsher still.

But as we shall see, as we shall see, it was a preamble to a gracious exposure of himself as the healer of Israel. Notwithstanding what was to follow, It is important for us to understand that what Christ is doing is a mystery.

I was reading this week from Max Lucado's book, In the Eye of the Storm.

[36 : 16] And yes, he has an account there of a fable, I think it is, where it came from.

It's not told. It tells about a story of an old man who was a poor old man. But the most precious possession that he had was a white horse.

And it was admired by many within his community. But they knew it was too precious for this poor old man to hang on to.

And they encouraged him to sell it and to make use of the money that would be realised to better himself.

But the old man was determined. He said, no, it was too precious for him to part with it. But then one day the horse disappeared.

[37 : 24] And those who were encouraging the old man to sell the horse did what many do in situations like that. He said, we told you so.

If only you had sold it when you had the chance, but now you have nothing. But the old man was determined. He said, don't speak too quickly. Only say that the horse is not in the stable.

That's all we know. The rest, he said, is judgment. And that was as far as he was prepared to go.

And the papal goes on to say that after a while, the horse returned with another eight wild horses accompanying it.

And the people said, otherwise, the man was wise after all. And they saw how good came out of his misfortune.

[38 : 32] But again, the old man said, you don't know, he said, the full story. You don't know what the outcome will be.

You said that what was going to be a curse is now a blessing. But you don't know that. And all we know is that the horse went and the horse came back and that there were other horses with it.

Well, the story goes on. And after a while, the old man had a son and he began to break the horses, to break them so that they could be sold on.

And then an accident occurred to the boy and he broke both legs. And then, in the true pattern of Job's comforters, the community came again.

Oh, we told you. We told you that ill would come of this. And now your son, your only son has broken his legs and there's nothing good going to come out of it.

[39 : 46] But again, the old man said, no, you don't know that. No one can say unless they see the whole picture. Yes, the horse went and he came back and my son has had his legs broken.

But that is all we can say. And then the story goes on. When a war was called and the young men were called to war, the only son that was spared was the son of the old man whose legs were broken.

And couldn't go. Now, the story of the fable was that there's a big picture. The big picture is often hidden from us. We see the small detail and we cannot see what it all means because we don't have all the parts to it.

And when Jesus is working here, we look at the small parts and we see how he ignored the woman, first of all, and how the disciples wanted to drive her away.

And then we see him speak almost with a hard heart to this woman. And the conclusion of anyone listening to it would be that Jesus does not want this woman.

[41 : 02] I am not sent but unto the last sheep of the house of Israel, he says. Jesus is the great physician.

Jesus knows who he is dealing with. Jesus knew what our need was and how best to deal with it. And sometimes when God deals with us, his ways are deeply mysterious.

And we cannot visit the end because the end is yet to come. In Mark's Gospel, we read there, Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled, for it is not me to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs.

In her answer we see the wisdom of faith, reminiscent perhaps of the words of Job. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

But I will maintain mine own ways before him. She was determined because she knew she was in the right place. She does not protest or deny him.

[42 : 20] The description is a description of someone who is willing to persevere in the face of all the trials and testings that life may truly bring your way.

William Bridge writes in his own comments, How should we follow our example? If I be a dog, Lord, yet I am thy dog.

And if I be a dog, Lord, yet crumbs belong to me. And if I be never so great a sinner, mercy and graces for sinners.

And I come to mercy. The wisdom that we see here is the wisdom of someone who knows that what she needs, he has for her.

The final thing we have here is, in the face of her importunity, Christ is willing to present her with a reward.

[43 : 26] Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto you, even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that moment.

Her petitions were answered and her daughter was healed. It may be reading too much into the passage from the silence of the woman, which is always dangerous. But she did not suggest to Christ what the answer to her prayer should be.

Many say in their prayers, this is my problem. And this is how it is to be resolved. And there is always that danger with us. We know best how to meet the Lord and how to come to the Lord.

But the Lord is the Lord. And he knows best how to answer our prayers. Even though we foolishly come and say, this is how the prayer should be answered.

We can learn from many of our own experiences. And learn from the experiences of others. You know the story of Augustine of old.

[44 : 41] He was reprobate. He was an out and out sinner. And his mother was worried about him. And fearful for his soul.

Because he was getting worse and worse. And when she heard that he was going to Rome. She came to God and prayed to God that he would keep him from Rome.

And that was a prayer. Because she feared that once he would go to that godless place. Idolatrous place. That he would succumb to it.

But God didn't answer her prayer. And Augustine went to Rome. But it was in Rome that he met with Christ.

Our perceived wisdom often comes between us and God. Most of all, this is a lesson to us of perseverance in prayer.

[45 : 39] And if our prayer is a prayer for grace. For mercy. For God to meet with us in our need. Then we do well to come to him until he answers.

According to his own wisdom. May he bless to us these few thoughts. Let us pray. O Lord our God. We give thanks for the example that is shown to us in the scripture.

Of the woman who persevered in the face of sore trial and temptation. We pray that you would encourage each of us to wait upon the Lord.

And that you would open our mouths. That our prayers would be in accordance with wisdom that is divine. Hear our prayers on behalf of those who do not pray for themselves.

We would pray Lord that you would open our mouths. And that what we seek would be to the good and glory. To their good and your glory.

[46 : 42] Watch over us now in Jesus name. And now may grace, mercy and peace from God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all. Now and always. Amen.