

Matthew 15:21–39

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[0:00] That's Matthew 15, 21-39. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.

My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, Send her away, for she is crying out after us. He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she came and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me. And he answered, It is not right to take the children's bread and throw at the dogs.

She said, Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered her, O woman, great is your faith.

Be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was healed instantly. Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there.

[1:08] And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others. And they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing.

And they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.

And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way. And the disciples said to him, Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?

And Jesus said to them, How many loaves do you have? They said, Seven, and a few small fish. And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish.

And having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples. And the disciples gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over.

[2:16] Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. I don't know if you've ever met a person who seems to be out to prove something.

The experience can be either invigorating or off-putting. It can be stimulating or insufferable.

And it depends on the kind of person who's out to prove something. On one hand, it describes someone who's argumentative, combative.

They have a chip on their shoulder. They never seem to live long enough to get it off. But on the other hand, if it's an attorney who is out to prove the just cause of an issue, you're longing for them to demonstrate this to you.

[3:31] Or perhaps that it's an unbiased scientist who spends months or years in a lab trying to demonstrate through repeated empirical evidence that something can be beneficial.

Well, if they're out to prove those things, God help them and speed them on their way. We've been looking at Matthew since last Advent.

And I think it's just time to realize he's out to prove something. And he falls in the latter category. He's not an attorney.

He's not a scientist. He's a writer. He's a businessman turned writer. What is it that he's out to prove?

And why is he so insistent on putting it down for records beyond his own generation? You know, if you go back to the very opening line, somewhere in a room when he opened up his laptop and he thought about how to start his winsome proofs, he penned this line.

[4 : 45] The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. He laid down something to hopefully, in his mind, convince you of.

I want to tell you about Jesus. And then there's the two-headed movements of his work. The son of David. The son of Abraham.

If you're not familiar with those terms, and there's no reason that all of us should be, the son of David was this technical term, this title of dignity that had roots in Israel's history, where their previous king of preeminence named David was promised by God that one would emerge from his line, who would be God's savior leader, God's, well, just put it as clearly as possible, a forever king over his people.

Matthew wants to say that he came to think Jesus fulfilled that, by claim, but also the son of Abraham.

Now, if you don't know much about Abraham, he came before David, and he was just a man from Ur that didn't know much about anything at the time.

[6 : 19] And God shows up and says, you know, you're going to have a son. No, let me get this right. You're going to have a lot of sons and a lot of daughters.

No, let me get this right. Get out of your tent and look up at the sky, and you're going to have a lineage that's as numerous as the sky. In fact, he's saying to Abraham, through you, I will bring forth one who will bring blessing to all.

That's actually the phrase. That's the promise. All the families of the earth. So what Matthew is trying to say, all the way from last Advent until now, is I'm about to prove something.

Don't think I'm argumentative or combative. I don't want you to think that I've got a chip on my shoulder. I want to be good to you. I want you to consider whether Jesus is the son of David that is a forever king, and whether he weds that to being the son of Abraham who can bring blessing to all people.

That's the argument of the book as a whole. According to Matthew, Jesus is God's forever king who comes to bring blessing to everyone.

[7 : 40] And now we're kind of in the middle of that slog, right? That big, long gospel. The one thing that's also come clear to me as I've meditated over these weeks of vacation is he also wanted you to know that what he came to believe about Jesus didn't carry much weight in its own day.

I could take you through the verses, but just take my word for it. Jesus said, to what do I compare this generation?

In Matthew's mind, the whole generation wasn't buying this. He actually goes beyond the generation to the prominent cities.

The people in the prominent cities weren't buying this. He actually says clearly. The religious establishment who was looking for those things, well, when Jesus came, they weren't buying this. In fact, my hometown says Jesus wasn't buying this. But that didn't stop Matthew. Matthew seemed to think that while the generation of Jesus wasn't going to recognize him as a king, that would bring blessing to anyone or everyone, he writes beyond his generation like writers do.

[9 : 11] They want their words to move beyond them and have effect in future days. And to that end, we come to this text. And I've been thinking about having a conversation with Matthew this morning, and I've asked him, Matthew, what do you want me to get done from this text?

What were you trying to get done at this moment in this big book that sets out this claim? And I didn't hear from him verbally, but in my own mind, I think he would say to me, I want your sermon to help people place their faith in Jesus and begin following him and let them know he's capable of meeting their every need.

Whether it be spiritual, physical, material, certainly eternal. Just let them know that. He gave us three scenes here.

Take a look. I hope you've got your Bible open right there in front of you. We're in Matthew again, and we're in chapter 15, 14.

Why am I getting lost in my own Bible? That ought to give you great hope. We're in chapter 15, and in verse 21, we see the first scene, and then in verse 29, a second scene, and then in verse 32, a third scene.

[10 : 38] And what I think is they each have a contribution to make to helping you place your faith in Jesus and begin to follow him as he is able to meet every spiritual need you have, every physical need you have, every material need you have, the eternal need that you have.

Scene one. Take a look. Verse 21. I call this scene along the Mediterranean Sea. Verse 21. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon, and behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.

My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. I get this idea of along the Mediterranean Sea because the words Tyre and Sidon were prominent cities right along the northern coastline, well north of Israel.

Some of you wish you could have vacationed this summer to the Mediterranean Sea. Perhaps some of you did. More power to you if you were able to get there. But here, Tyre and Sidon are two cities on the prominent coastline.

Yeah. To the first readers, they would have known more. They would have known more than the geography.

[12 : 11] They would have known the history. Can I tell you what they would have known? They would have known that these are two places that were prominently known for being longstanding enemies of Israel.

I mean, they appear repeatedly in Israel's historical record. whether it be the book of Amos that actually calls down God's judgment on places like this because they're willing to sell off a whole people to eat them.

Or whether it be Isaiah who says that they were this merchant-like stronghold on the harbor that got wealthy on the unjust gains of cargo that had come from other parts of the world.

Or Ezekiel that says God has had enough of times of tire inside. And what I'm trying to tell you is that Jesus intentionally withdrew to a place that we should recognize were longstanding enemies of God's people.

Why does he go there? And notice the kind of person he meets in that place. Did you see her? Verse 22. Behold, a Canaanite woman from that region.

[13 : 27] It doesn't just say a woman. Matthew wants you to know it's a Canaanite woman. Now, you and I might just gloss over that. But again, those who were reading this initially had more clues than you and I might have.

I mean, just as Tyre and Sidon were a place known for being longstanding enemies of God's people after they had gotten into the land and after they'd been thrown out of the land, well, the Canaanites, they have a longer history against God's people.

These are the ones that Joshua was supposed to go in and displace. These were enemies of God and therefore God's people had to take action.

Jesus then is withdrawing to a place that's known to stand in opposition to God's people. Jesus is encountering a person who has a lineage of needing to be displaced from God's presence.

And look what she says. It says she was crying. Crying out, really.

[14 : 44] You'll see the disciples in verse 23. Even she's crying out. She doesn't just say, hello, Jesus, son of David.

No, she's repeatedly, continually, on goingly, disruptively crying out.

Have mercy on me, oh Lord. Here it is. Here it is. Isn't it interesting? Son of David. She picks up on this Matthew 1, one term. I mean, that's kind of stunning.

So she's saying that as the son of David, she has a confession then. She confesses that I believe you to be the son of David and I believe that the son of David might have mercy on me.

But remember, the son of David was particularly a term for Israel, for God's own people. And notice what he does.

[15 : 46] Her need is spiritual and it's not only for herself. It's for her daughter. She goes to Jesus, son of David, concerned for her daughter, who's severely oppressed by a demon.

And what does Jesus do? This is fascinating to me. he ignores her. Verse 30, 23 says he did not answer her a word.

And that's not very hopeful. The disciples move beyond wanting him to ignore her. They want him to dismiss her.

Send this lady away. We've got stuff to get done and she's making too much noise in the back and have her go out into the foyer, please. And he answered her after the disciples wanted to dismiss her that he was actually completely indifferent toward her.

I mean, there's no hope here after verse 24. He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Again, like, if you think I'm the son of David, then you ought to know that I'm about my own people.

[17:02] I'm here for my own. I love verse 25. This woman of great dignity, this mother who's concerned for her child, this one who doesn't know how to get the spiritual order of her home in a place where her daughter would flourish.

Verse 25, but she came and knelt before him saying, Lord, help me. I know that's also the preacher's prayer, Lord, help me.

I also know that more often than not at about this time in the sermon, you're saying to yourself, Lord, help him. But here it is, Lord, Lord, help me. and notice he's not yet willing.

It's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. He moves from ignoring her to the disciples wanting to dismiss her toward this ongoing indifference toward her even though she's now right in front of him and on her knees in this home and she has this masterful line yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.

Wow. This is a lady I want to meet and sit with and talk to one day. What's going on there?

[18:44] She seems to confess that you're the son of David but she wants him to grab hold of the promises given to the son of Abraham.

She's wanting to take these two titles of chapter one verse one and saying yes I know you are son of David for your own house but but I think that you might have something for me too.

This is a me too prayer. This is a but aren't you as the son of David also the one who's to bring blessing to anyone and everyone and all the families of the earth.

Don't I get some of those crumbs? I've seen some of you that have dogs. In fact I've actually met people that have dogs. You know I don't have one. That's okay.

I love your dog. Some of you have actually told me that you have dogs in order that they would clean up what's on the floor. That they would... You don't have to use your broom at the end of the meal.

[19:51] That's basically what she's saying. She's saying Lord I know I'm not of the people of Israel. I know I'm a person that's under God's judgment. I know that the promises to Israel don't apply to me but do not the promises of Israel entail the promises to Abraham and do not the promises of Abraham indicate that you have something yet for me.

If you are who I think you are you have got something for me. And at that point Jesus brings son of Abraham and son of David together and he says oh woman great is your faith be it done for you as you desire and her daughter was healed instantly.

In other words what's the point of that opening scene? Matthew seems to be proving he's out to prove that the son of David is Jesus and he's willing to wed himself to the promises that go to the son of Abraham.

That now in one person we have Israel's history both for herself and the world coming to fruition in a spiritual way that will help somebody.

There's great mercy for spiritual healing. this is the implication that if it's true for her it's true for you. That's what might be wants you to know that if it's true for her it can be true for you.

[21:26] You can receive mercy even if it's even though you don't know anything about the promises of God and that Jesus is willing to do it.

Great mercy for spiritual healing for any who possess great faith. Great hope for anyone here who's willing to go to Jesus.

What a great story. And yet Matthew seems to be aware of its limitations. I mean this is a single person. He says verse 28 and her daughter was healed instantly.

I mean in other words you're just going to have to take his word for it. You might say yeah one woman one place one moment but the healing itself isn't actually verified.

there's no empirical evidence other than the writer himself telling me I should buy this. And so maybe that's why we get scene two.

[22:36] Maybe we move from the Mediterranean Sea to the Sea of Galilee because Matthew is aware that he's got more leg work to do.

Look at verse 29. It shifts. Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. Now you need to know that that means he probably has moved about 35 miles inland.

Probably you know he walked 10 miles a day. I don't know how many you do on vacation. Maybe some of you do more. I do less. But at any rate he got his steps in for at least three days journey and he's moved inland off the Mediterranean Sea to the Sea of Galilee.

evidently picked up a ragtag group of people along the way. I mean it reads a little bit like Woodstock of 69.

I mean he goes up on a mountain and he sits down there and great crowds it says. My Bible says verse 30. Great crowds came to him. Somewhere along those three days journey some people who were desperate said maybe he's got something for me too.

[23 : 52] And just take a look at who they were. I mean this is quite a sentence. Verse 30. Great crowds came to him bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others and they put them in his feet and he healed them.

So that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seen and they glorified the God of Israel. The need here is not spiritual oppression for those that you love.

The need here was physical disability, the disablement. I mean you can picture it can't you? It's a physical need.

This is on a large scale outdoor medical center with no check-in policy. That's what's now coming around Jesus. Just about a month ago I was in the emergency room a few blocks from here, the waiting room.

If you've ever been there, it's tough, it's cramped, it's crowded, every chair is taken and people are waiting for hours upon hours upon hours to be seen.

[25 : 09] And even once they're seen and they get behind the double white door, they might end up on a gurney because all the rooms back there are filled. And so a space that's meant to assist the physical needs of say 40 people is somehow overrun with 240 and you'll parade your way by individual after individual after individual whose needs and ailments you do not know but whose attention is not yet being received.

believe. Well, imagine that's what's happening here. I mean, the language is meant to stack these things up.

In the black church you would call this a run. Matthew got his own run going. The lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others.

I mean, I can feel it, not in a song, but I can feel it in a rap. The lame, the blind, the mute, and many others. They're here.

Think of the birth defects. Somebody brought them. Think of the accidents at that time of the world.

[26 : 28] You know, you break an arm, maybe it's a compound fracture, never quite healed correctly. Think of the falling.

Think of the burns, my friend. Think of the burns. I'm talking, right, Keith? Think of the burns.

Think of the things that we avail ourselves of, of healing, and skin grafts, and none of that capacity. Think of the lame. Think of the crippled.

Think of those who are even today in institutions trying to sort out their physical, their spiritual, their emotional, their, the disablement of life that has them captive.

They're just, they're overrunning the place. Even this last week, I've seen it again. I was just down at Shirley Ryan, used to be the RIC, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, number one in the world for the last 35 years, and you walk into the place and it's state-of-the-art and you've got to hit a button to go to one floor to see what they're doing to help people with their legs and their feet and the movement.

[27 : 42] You've got to hit a whole other button to go to a floor where people are trying to recover the ability to use their hands. You've got to go to another floor to help people that are dealing with eyesight and skin grafts and hips that are broken and how do I walk again and how do I even sit in a wheelchair to shower again and how might I actually ever be able to stand again and where am I going to go when I get out of here again and it's full.

It's the best our world has to offer. We've got people in our congregation there today. Jesus is there. I was earlier this week in the living room of another member of our church. Came from his appointment at Northwestern had brain cancer 2015-2016.

My brother Marcus Mitchell he's a walking miracle but this week he said no more. No more treatments.

This week on the south side in his home and hundreds like him. No more treatments. Turning the corner.

[29 : 05] Willingness or readiness. A necessity to turn one's eyes toward heaven. Towards help. Towards is this life the whole thing or might there be more?

This week I'm in the hospital. Young lady in our church fortunate to be alive. Carrying a child that's going to be born six weeks premature already just born last night.

Diagnosed miraculously because of the medical intervention that we have today a little over a month ago that there was a condition that was so serious it could take her life and the life of the baby.

they're all here in our day with the best treatment on the globe in all of human history available within ten miles of where you sit.

Jesus is out here on the Sea of Galilee and evidently there are thousands of people now. stunning really it says simply and he healed them so that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking the crippled healthy the lame walking the blind seeing the wonder could this be that's seen too could this one be the son of David whom Isaiah said would have characteristics in his capacity within his capacity to help the blind see and the lame walk and the crippled be upright.

[31 : 00] Is it possible? They wonder and it says they glorified the God of Israel. It's like glory! You know this week I asked Marcus Mitchell on his bed as he turned his eyes toward heaven give me a word one word that you would give to the congregation today as you turn toward heaven.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Rising from the bedsheets of the south side of Chicago.

Hallelujah!

I'm going to see them face to face. Hallelujah! I asked another member in our church, Shirley Ryan, give me one word as you try to learn how to sit in a wheelchair and pull yourself up one day in a shower again.

One word! She said, glory! Glory! I want to manifest the glory of God who's met every spiritual need I've ever had, who's working with me in every physical disability I have.

I put my faith, they say, in the one. I sat with a young mother-to-be this week, watched her vibrant face, prepared to bring life into the world when her own life was at risk.

[32 : 28] Hey, no wonder they wondered, man, how long were you in Shirley Ryan?

Weeks, months, and months. Jesus takes people with birth defects, physical disabilities, the crippled, the burned, the deformed, the disfigured, Matthew, in doing so, wants to say to you, not only is Jesus the son of David who's willing to attach himself to the promises of Abraham, that someone like a Canaanite woman can have spiritual health in her own home, he wants to say, yeah, he is the son of David, he is the one that came and fulfilled all those promises.

Genesis 12 seems to be coming true in the text. Through you, all families of the earth will be blessed. But then we got that third scene, and I'll be quick because I know your mind is moving. what's this third scene about a feeding of 4,000? How does this contribute to his desire that you would have faith in Jesus and begin following him, being aware that he could meet your every spiritual, physical, material, and eternal need?

What does this do? Didn't we already see a feeding of 5,000? Yes, we did. Evidently, there's a second miracle. What contribution does this take?

[34 : 21] Now we've moved from the Mediterranean Sea to the Sea of Galilee to this kind of outdoor dining place on the mountain where they're eating fish and overlooking the waters.

Since the crowd was there, Jesus says, I have compassion. That's the key word. The mercy that the woman wanted in verse 22 is now united to the compassion that he has in verse 32.

Mercy and compassion wedded in one person. He says, I have compassion on the crowd. They've been with me now three days. They have nothing to eat. I'm unwilling to send them away hungry lest they faint upon the way.

I'm unwilling, he says, to not meet the very temporal immediate need of a meal lest they faint on the way. And so there is this question to the disciples or from the disciples.

How are we going to do that? He says, what have you got? Well, we've got seven loaves of bread. They're at least three, four days old now. Got a few small fish.

[35 : 43] I'm not sure anyone on the alone show could survive on this for long, but there they are. We've got a few fish, nothing smoked at the moment, a few loaves of bread. Jesus takes them and look at the words, because they're foreshadowing something later in his gospel.

Look at the words, they foreshadow something. He took the loaves, verse 36, and the fish, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples and said, give them to the crowds. Later, we're not there yet, but later, what he does for them physically here, he will do with his disciples at the last supper.

He will take bread, he will break it and say, this is my body which is provision, there's this sense of, I am bread from heaven.

I am the source of life. It's as though this scene is mirroring Exodus where God sees the condition of his people and he says, I've heard their cry and I've come down to rescue them.

This is again Israel in the wilderness where they go, we've got no food and God says, well I will rain down manna from heaven. I will provide for you.

[36 : 59] I will get you through the next 40 years. They ate it for 40 years. Dear friend of mine, I said to him once, what's the hardest thing about ministry?

He goes, oh David, he was Australian, I can't do the accent, but in any way I keep you away for three seconds. The first 50 years are the hardest. Yeah, the first 50 are the hardest.

But Jesus is saying, I get you there. Spiritually, I have what you need. Physically, I have what you need. Materially, I'll have what you need.

But all of that, knowing all of that in a world that collapses, in a world that grinds down into death, is something that is forever bread, is something that is eternal.

This is my body, which is for you. This is my blood, which is for you. This is the entrance into an eternal table in which all of these things will be restored and made clear.

[38 : 01] So in other words, the feeding of the 4,000 is simply a call, an invitation, let's put it that way, an invitation for you to believe. Matthew's saying, I showed you, I showed you he's the son of David that's willing to wed himself to the promises of Abraham.

I've indicated through evidence of a number of people into the thousands that he's capable of meeting their needs. And now the question is, will you let him feed you?

Do you believe? Is it a matter of faith? You know that because next week in verse 8, Jesus is going to say to the disciples, owe you a little faith. And you know that because if you read the gospel of John, he's going to take the feeding of these thousands and he's going to say, the question is, do you believe he's bred from heaven?

Do you believe he is who he says is? This story is here as an invitation for you to say, are you with him or not? Are you buying Matthew's argument or walking away?

Bread from heaven, sent down, God? The point is simply this, in the book of Exodus, it wasn't Moses who fed God's people, it was God who fed God's people.

[39 : 24] In this wilderness, it's God acting on behalf of his people with compassion. Jesus is the living word, he can sustain you if you will come to him, he will feed you and he's actually concerned for you, he doesn't want you to faint along the way, you can trust him in other words for daily bread.

This is the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer, even Jesus' prayer wasn't let me have enough so that I never have to worry about anything. His prayer was what? Give us this day, you finish it, our daily bread.

Feed me then till I want no more. God what are you making of Matthew's argument? I'm telling you and I'm done, he's out to prove something to you.

He's out to prove to you that Jesus is worthy of your faith, the beginning steps of your following because he alone can meet every spiritual, physical, material, temporal, and eternal need that you have.

And the reason he can, well that's why you got to keep coming back because the final validation, the final sign, the final proof will be his own victory over death.

[40 : 49] It'll be his victory over this life, his victory over the things that ail you. All of that's coming but I would say to you today, I hope you're ready to begin following Jesus.

Do you believe him? That is Matthew. Do you believe Matthew? Will you transfer your trust to Jesus?

For yourself, for those that you love that are in great need, give it to Jesus.

Jesus, our heavenly father, thank you for this gospel, this good news, this collection of experiences that Matthew saw with his own eyes that we're not privy to but help us Lord to see that he's answering the questions of our heart in the person of your son, Jesus, Jesus, bread from heaven, we need you, we desire you, we place our faith in you, in Jesus name we pray, amen. Well, let's get on our feet.