

Jesus With The Gentiles

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[0:00] Well, last week, we were looking at Matthew 15, the first half, and essentially, Jesus declares all foods clean.

And so what he's doing there is he's removing these boundaries between Jew and Gentile. And so basically, he's removing this kind of restricted access sign to Jews.

We've all seen restricted access signs. You've seen them like this. Keep out. No trespassing.

Employees only. Maybe you've been in an airport.

You're thirsty and you want to sit down and you want to go into one of those nice clubs and it says members only. Authorized personnel only. For the majority of us in the room, we're all Gentiles.

Which means this. If you're of European descent or Central or South American descent or African descent or Asian descent, if you're not of Jewish descent, you're a Gentile according to the flesh.

[1:13] And because you're a Gentile leading up to the time before Jesus, you would have had restricted access to God's grace, to the God of the Bible.

But that all changed with Jesus. And we saw that last week as he declared all foods clean. And it's like it's not about what you eat that makes you dirty.

It's what comes out of your heart that makes you dirty. And that applies to Jews as well as Gentiles.

This morning, we're going to see how Jesus gives Gentiles unrestricted access to the saving grace of God by faith.

For Gentiles, there's no more keep out sign from the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible has come to all people and said, come to me through Jesus.

So this morning, we're going to look at Matthew 15, verses 21 through 39. And there are three scenes in this stretch of Scripture. And it's three scenes of Jesus interacting with Gentiles.

[2:31] It's really interesting. We're going to be spending most of our time on scene one where Jesus interacts with a Canaanite woman. But we're going to look at the other two scenes briefly.

And what we're going to see is that God has given unrestricted access to Gentiles through Jesus.

So if you would turn in your Bibles now to Matthew 15, verses 21 through 28.

I'm going to read that for you. One of the things that we're going to see woven through these three scenes, we're going to see the compassion of Jesus for Gentiles. Now hang in with me on this first scene.

You're going to hear Jesus say some things that are like, did he really just call that woman a dog?

Hang in there with me. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

And behold, a Canaanite woman from the region came out and was crying, Have mercy on me, Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. But he did not answer her a word.

[3:43] And his disciples came and begged him, saying, Send her away, for she's crying out after us. He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But she came up and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me. And he answered, It's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to 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. In verse 21, we read that Jesus, that he withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

And what you need to know is that Tyre and Sidon, they are coastline cities in the area called Phoenicia. And Phoenicia was a Gentile region just north of Galilee.

[4:48] And so basically, what this means is, Jesus was going into the unclean zone. Phoenicians were Canaanites.

And that should ring a bell if you're familiar with the Bible a little bit. Because do you remember when God delivered His people out of Egypt, and He brought them to the promised land, the land of Canaan, and God's people were to remove the inhabitants of the land of Canaan in order to occupy the land of Canaan?

Well, the Canaanites became a just thorn in the side of Israel for century after century. And they were the ancient arch enemy of the nation of Israel.

So, when we read in Matthew, Jesus withdraws to Tyre and Sidon, which is up in Phoenicia, to the Jewish mind reading this or hearing this, they're thinking that Jesus is headed to an unclean region of historically hostile people.

Now, Jesus is going outside the boundaries of Israel. He's going off the reservation, so to speak. And so the question we need to ask is, why is He leaving?

[6:09] Why is He leaving Galilee? Why is He going up to Phoenicia? What's going on with that? Well, there are two reasons why. The first one is this. There's a pattern of Jesus that we see in Matthew 12 and Matthew 14 when there is hostility and tensions rise.

When He confronts Pharisees or He hears about Herod being afraid of Him, He will withdraw so that any kind of tensions can de-escalate so that His effectiveness of ministry isn't hindered.

So, He's seeking to withdraw in order to fulfill the mission that His Father has called Him on. So, that's one reason why He's withdrawn. The second reason is this.

Remember, at the beginning of Matthew 15, the first half, Jesus has just called the Pharisees from Jerusalem, you hypocrites, and then He brings down Isaiah on them. You honor me with your lips, but your hearts are far from me.

And so, with that tension, Jesus withdraws up into Tyre and Sidon, up to this region. But that's not the only reason why He's up there. Jesus is going to reveal God's heart for all people while He's in this region.

[7:21] He purposely heads north from Galilee. He's got kingdom work to do up around Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus has already had some interaction with Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew, in Matthew chapter 8. Remember the centurion? He heals his daughter from a distance.

And then when He casts out the demon who occupied those two men up in those grave sites, that was in Gentile land, in a Gentile region called the Decapolis.

Here in verse 22, we have an interaction between Jesus and a woman. But it's no ordinary woman. She is what Matthew calls a Canaanite woman.

And so let me just read verse 22 again. And behold, one of Matthew's favorite expressions to draw your attention to something, and behold, a Canaanite woman from the region came out and was crying.

[8:24] Now in the Gospel of Mark, that's written to Gentiles, Mark calls this woman a Syrophenician woman. And so Syria, Phoenicia, woman, Mark doesn't really care about what Jews would think about that.

Matthew does care. And so the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew is heightening this woman's Canaanite background just to remind everybody reading, there's going to be some tensions here. And so this Canaanite woman, she comes out, and she's yelling.

And she's yelling for a reason, because she's at a distance. And so when your mind imagines this, you've got to think about this woman being at a distance, and she's crying out.

She's raising her voice. And what is she saying? She's saying this. Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David. Have mercy on me.

She's obviously in a desperate place. She needs some kind of help. And we're going to learn that these cries were incessant cries for mercy.

[9:36] She's pleading for grace. Just help me. She's not saying anything. Look what I've done for you. I've been so good. Blah, blah, blah.

Help me. Have mercy on me. That's what she's crying out. And did you notice how she addresses this Jewish foreigner? Lord.

Lord. O Lord, Son of David. Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David. Now that word Lord can be a simple and polite title like greeting someone like, hello, sir.

But when you combine that word Lord with that title, Son of David, you realize she is confessing him as Lord. Do you know what the Son of David is?

It's a reference to Jesus being descended from King David. It is pointing to his Messiahship that she recognizes somehow, somehow, she's heard somehow, somehow that this Jewish guy who's come up from Galilee is the Son of David.

[10:50] O Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. And then she elaborates her need for mercy. My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

She is watching her daughter brutally oppressed by a demon. She's got to be feeling helpless. Anybody in the room ever feel helpless before?

You know how this woman is feeling. And maybe you've come into the building feeling helpless yourself. Maybe you're living with some kind of brutal oppression.

As a Gentile, is the Jewish Messiah going to hear you when you cry out to Him? Will He have mercy on you? Well, let's see what Jesus does.

In verse 23, but He did not answer her a word. She's crying out. She's desperate. Jesus seemingly does nothing.

[11:55] He ignores her. He remains silent. Now, for those of us who've been walking through the Gospel of Matthew, this is highly unusual for Jesus. Because up until this point, we have not seen one instance of Jesus turning someone away who has honestly sought His help.

We haven't seen it. And so when He is approached by this desperate woman and He kind of gives her the cold shoulder that's somehow playing hard to get, we're kind of like, Jesus, what are You doing?

This is so unusual. We wouldn't expect that. What He's actually doing is what would have been expected for any other Jewish rabbi interacting with a Gentile woman.

And that would have been to ignore her. But this is Jesus. Now remember that Jesus is a master teacher. He knows the heart of people and He knows the heart of this woman.

He's playing hard to get for a reason. We're going to see that come out as we walk through this little passage. What He's doing is He's drawing out this woman's faith.

[13:06] And in just a few verses, we're going to see her faith bloom in spectacular fashion. Jesus is silent, but His disciples, they can't take it anymore.

This Canaanite woman, this mom, is just, have mercy on me! Have mercy! And the disciples are like, Jesus, will You just give her what she wants and send her away?

This is killing us! The best way to visualize all this is that this Gentile woman is at a distance crying out incessantly for mercy from Jesus and His disciples, but Jesus has not engaged the woman yet. He hasn't said anything to her. And against the background of her crying out for help, the disciples now are making their own case to Jesus. Would You just send her away?

Give her what she wants! This is brutal! In verse 24, Jesus says to His disciples, I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[14:14] So they ask Jesus to essentially, would You just give her what she needs? And Jesus responds to them, Hey, I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The people of the nation of Israel. The Israelites, the Jews, that's the ones to whom I was sent to. Did this Canaanite woman hear what Jesus said?

I'm guessing she did. I think Jesus said this just loud enough so that she could have heard Him say that to His disciples. And so what Jesus is essentially saying is like, No, I'm not going to give her what she wants because my mission is to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

So here is Jewish Jesus and Gentile Phoenicia denying mercy to a Gentile mother in need because apparently His mission is restricted only to the lost sheep of Israel.

but we know otherwise because we've already gone through Matthew chapter 8. We have seen how Jesus compassionately heals the centurion's daughter.

[15:33] We've already seen Jesus deliver two men around the Decapolis from demonic oppression. We've already seen it. Even in Matthew 10 when Jesus sends out His twelve to the lost sheep of Israel, He sends them out and He tells them there's going to come a day where you're going to be brought before the Gentiles and you're going to need to bear witness to them.

And you will be given words at that time. So we know that there's more going on here. We know that Jesus is saying these things a little tongue in cheek. That there's something else happening. He's drawn out the woman's faith. I would argue that Jesus in fact wants to show her mercy. He's just waiting for the right moment.

Now, have you ever been praying your guts out to Jesus and you feel like He's not answering you or not hearing you? You feel like, okay, I'm just pleading my case and it doesn't seem like He's anywhere around.

Well, I just want to encourage you. Don't give up. the Lord Jesus, the risen Christ, He just, He very well may be just drawing out your faith. Just bringing you to a point where He then acts on your behalf.

[16:52] And this woman, she doesn't give up. Look at verse 25. Jesus says, hey, I'm not going to help her because I'm, you know, going to the lost sheep of Israel.

And then she came and knelt before Him. So she was at a distance and now she comes to Jesus and not just comes, she doesn't get in His face, you're going to give me what I want.

She drops at His feet. She kneels down. And when someone kneels down before somebody else, it's an act of humility and an act of reverence.

This Gentile woman has recognized this man to be her Lord. The son of David and she drops at His feet.

This is happening in Phoenicia. Just a few verses ago, Jesus was confronting male Pharisees who were experts in the Bible who were anticipating some kind of Messiah in the country of Israel.

[18:05] And they didn't get it. They rejected Him. But here, we have this woman, Canaanite, who has no expertise in the Bible, but somehow she's heard that this guy is the son of David.

She has no position of authority in that here she is, come in Phoenicia, drops at the feet of Jesus, confessing Him as Lord, son of David.

Isn't that a bit ironic? So, the second time, she drops at His feet and she says, Lord, help me.

And don't you wish you were there just to hear, was it a whisper? Were there tears? We don't know. But what we do know, this is the second time she has called Him Lord.

And it should get your attention. What is Jesus going to do? Well, in verse 26, Jesus says this, it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

[19:17] It's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. So this woman is at His feet crying out for help and He says, it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

Is this the same Jesus that we have been watching all throughout the Gospel of Matthew just compassionately engage anybody that came to Him? It is.

Something else is going on. God's looking to get something done here. And He's looking to get something done for us. Now at this point in history, dogs would have been considered unclean to Jews even though some Jews would keep them as household pets.

But at this point, Jews would often call Gentiles dogs because they're unclean pests. And so it was slang.

And so it's like us calling someone a dirty rat. You rat! And so when a Jew would call a Gentile a dog, it was just further separating the two races out.

[20:32] Jew from Gentile. Clean from unclean. And so Jesus is using the slang of the day to bait this woman to see how she's going to respond.

And so it's a bit tongue in cheek. That's the way you've got to be listening to this. Now, so the dogs is a reference to not women but to Gentiles.

And then the children is a reference to the people of Israel. The children of Abraham. And Jesus is saying it's not right to take what the kids need and throw it to the dogs.

It's just not right. That's what Jesus is saying. Tongue in cheek. Again, we don't know the tone of his face or his voice or the expression on his face but I'm convinced that what he is saying is not harsh but kind.

There is some kind of invitation to what he is saying because what we're going to see next is just full bloom of this Canaanite woman's faith.

[21:39] She is a spicy lady. Feisty. And full of faith. Look at verse 27. She said, Yes, Lord.

Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Yes, Lord. The best way to take that yes is yes it is.

And so what this woman is saying to Jesus is this. He says, it's not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to the dogs. And she says, oh yes it is.

Oh yes it is right. It is right. To take the bread for the kids and give them to the dogs. Do you see what she's doing?

Do you see the spice in her? She's disagreeing with the king. With the Messiah. It's right to feed the dogs.

[22:38] She says, yes Lord. It's the third time she's called him Lord. So here's what she's saying. She's saying, I'm not asking you to choose between children and dogs Lord.

I'm not asking you to just give it all to the dogs. She's saying, there's enough bread to go around. For even the dogs like me is what she's saying.

For even dogs like me will eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. She's saying, I'll take anything from your kosher table master.

Anything. Feed the kids first. I'll take the crumbs. It's a striking profession of faith.

She's saying, Lord, Lord, I'm not asking you to stop to feed your children for the sake of this dog. I'll take the crumbs. This Gentile woman is claiming this man as her Jewish Lord.

[23:45] It's phenomenal. She's so desperate. She doesn't care what Jesus calls her. Just give me some of your leftovers, Jesus. Just give me some crumbs.

It's like, Jesus, if it comes from you, it's going to be enough. This woman's faith is humble and persistent and we have so much to learn from her.

It's exactly the place desperate people need to be. At the feet of Jesus saying, give me anything you've got because I know it's going to help.

In verse 28, Jesus turns his full attention to this woman and says directly to her in fullness for the first time, he says, O woman, great is your faith.

That O of the O woman that is an emotionally packed O. It is full of compassion. O woman, Jesus has been waiting for this moment for her to say this, for her to reach this point and say, I'll take anything.

[24:56] And he's going to give her everything. O woman, great is your faith. The only people in the Gospel of Matthew commended for their faith are Gentiles.

This woman here, and the centurion whose faith was like nobody else's in Israel. this Canaanite woman knew she was in the presence of the son of David.

This was her Lord, and he alone was able to show her the mercy she needed. Very unlike the Pharisees we just saw. They didn't care.

They thought he was a kook. But not this woman. She sees him for who he is. He's the son of David. The Messiah.

He goes on to say, be it done for you as you desire. And at that moment, her daughter was instantly healed. But did you notice? The focus isn't on the healing.

[26:01] The focus is on the faith of this woman. Her persistent, humble faith. Jesus is saying, O woman, you are right.

I am the son of David. And I am your Lord, and you are welcome to my table. Receive my mercy. And he heals her daughter. What we're seeing here is this. Access to the kingdom is no longer a matter of ethnicity.

It's a matter of faith. what you believe about this man, Jesus of Nazareth. And when we compare and contrast it to the way of the Pharisees, this woman's response is striking.

So if I were to summarize what is the point of this, it would be this. Gentiles now have unrestricted access to the saving grace of God by faith in Jesus.

[27:12] Jesus is doing a game changer up in Tyre and Sidon. He's healing Gentiles. He's welcoming their engagement of him.

Now, a couple walkaways from this. Here's how I want you to be thinking about this. remember that you have Gentile roots.

Remember that. Remember that. Remember you are a Gentile according to the flesh. By and large, the majority of us in this room are Gentiles according to the flesh.

And remember there was a time when we were outside, we had restricted access to the God of the Bible. Remember that. Jesus said to the woman at the well, salvation is from the Jews.

And we had restricted access, but no more. Jesus has opened the way. And so remember your Gentile roots, but rejoice in your Jewish Messiah.

[28:25] Because He has opened the way for you as a Gentile to come into a saving relationship with the God of the Bible. You remember in Matthew 27 when Jesus died on the cross and immediately afterwards the curtain was torn in two from top to bottom.

It's a picture of God opening up a way. That's not just good news for Jews. That's great news for Gentiles. God has opened the way for all people through Jesus to come into His holy presence. And it was through the shedding of Jesus blood that He secured our access to the holy living God forever. Remember, rejoice, cry out for help.

If you're in a hard place, take your cues from this Canaanite woman. Help me Lord. Lord, help me. Lord, help me.

In this passage, four times, the word Lord shows up. When she first acknowledges Jesus, when she comes and falls at His feet and says, Lord, help me.

[29:45] Help me. In verse 26, excuse me, verse 27, she says, yes, Lord, that's the third time.

For even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. That word master is another way of translating the Greek word Lord. From their Lord's table.

Four times in this brief passage, we see a Gentile woman referring to Jesus as her Lord. Cry out to her. Cry out to your Lord, brothers and sisters.

He may be Jewish, but He is your Lord. And He has a compassionate heart to you. When He says, O woman, could it be that He is saying the same to you?

O Michael, O dear one, O you of great little faith, come to me. Well, scene one is we see Jesus interacting with this Canaanite woman.

[30:57] And what we see happening here is God through Christ has made a way for Gentiles to have unrestricted access to God's grace.

The next scene takes place, we see that happening, starting in verse 29 through 31. Jesus leaves Tyre and Sidon, and He goes south and He ends up on a hill by the Sea of Galilee and He sits down and it's the posture of teaching and then all these crowds start bringing people in various kinds of physical need to Jesus and He starts healing them one after another.

And so it's striking. So in verse 30, and great crowds came to Him bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put Him at His feet, literally threw Him down at His feet.

They're like, only you can do something about this. And look what He does. And He healed them. Do you know why He healed them? Because He had compassion on them. And so the compassion with which He spoke to the Canaanite woman is the compassion in action we're seeing right here as He heals people.

But you know what's interesting? It's who the crowds are. At the end of Matthew 14, Jesus, after walking in the water, they go to this place called Gennesaret.

[32:25] And when Jesus shows up, all these people flock to Him and everyone, as many touched Him were made well. All these were Jews. What's happening here?

These crowds? These aren't Jews. These are Gentiles. Thousands of Gentiles coming to Jesus, bringing people to be healed.

And here's how I know that. In Mark chapter 7, Mark makes it clear that Jesus is in Decapolis, which is a Gentile region. But in this text, if you look at the end of verse 31, we see, so that the crowd wondered.

He's healing them. They're amazed at what's happening. They saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

There's no reason to include the God of Israel if this were Jewish people giving praise to God. These are not Jewish people.

[33:30] These are Gentile people. And so what we see happening in this scene is that Jesus is providing unrestricted access to hundreds if not thousands of people.

He heals one after another. One after another. Now if you were on that hill with Jesus watching this happen, I think you would be glad to just stay with Jesus as long as you could.

And that's what we see happening in the final scene. Scene 3, starting in verse 32. This is where Jesus feeds the 4,000. Jesus heals all these people in need because of His compassion.

He's welcoming the Gentiles. And in scene 3, we see in verse 32, Jesus calls His disciples to Him and says, I have compassion on the crowds because they have been with Me now three days and I'm nothing to eat and I'm unwilling to send them away hungry lest they faint on the way.

These are the same crowds. These are the people He's been healing. These are Gentile crowds. And so what we see going on here is this.

[34:50] These Gentiles who came out to see Jesus weren't planning on spending three days with Him. They've run out of food. Jesus knows this. He has compassion on them.

And so He tells His disciples, hey, I've got compassion on them. Let's do something about it. And I can just see Peter saying to Andrew, oh no, Master's having one of His compassion moments. What does this mean for us now? The disciples say to Him, where are we going to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed 4,000 dudes?

Probably 8,000 to 10,000 people altogether. Jesus says, how many loaves do you have? They say, seven loaves and two fish probably dried fish for transport.

Carry around with Him. I want you to see something really sweet. So here we have 8,000 to 10,000 Gentile dogs around Jesus.

[35:58] and His 12 disciples, these children of Abraham. What is Jesus going to do?

He's going to take the bread of the children and He's going to share it with the dogs. And so the feeding of the 4,000 shows Jesus doing the very thing that He spoke of with a Canaanite woman. It was tongue-in-cheek then, but here it's on glorious display. His compassion in action. He takes this bread, He gives thanks for it, He breaks it, and then He gives it to His disciples who then distribute it to the crowds.

Now what's amazing about this is some of the language here at the risk of making you yawn. When Jesus gives thanks for this, it's a one-time event.

Pop, give thanks, done. When He breaks the bread, pop, one-time event, done. But the language of when He gives the disciples, it's ongoing language.

[37:26] He gives and gives and gives. He keeps giving them bread. He keeps multiplying it out. So I don't know if you have imagined this miracle as the miracle actually taking place in between people passing the bread from one to the other.

What we're reading here is the miracle was taking place at the ground zero of Jesus. He was multiplying the bread. He kept handing it out, giving it out, and the disciples would give it out. The satisfier, the multiplier, is the one doing it. The miracle is happening at Jesus. He kept giving and giving and giving, and He eventually gave so that all 8,000 to 10,000 people, men, women, and children, ate to their fill.

Not just crumbs. He satisfied them. And there were seven baskets left over. He takes the bread of the children of Abraham, and He distributes it to the Gentile dogs, because He had compassion on them.

What we see happening here is that Jesus is giving unrestricted access to these Gentiles, to God's grace, by faith.

