

I'm a Dog

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Date: 20 August 2017

[0:00] Jesus answered, It is 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. In the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. So, have you ever noticed that there are stereotypes about every generation? Notice that?

And we don't really have to think very hard to point some of those out. Some of those stereotypes can be pretty brutal when you get right down to it. But let's think about them for a second. Now, the oldest generation represented in our ranks, it's really hard to say anything bad about you, to be honest.

Thank you for being awesome. You have our gratitude. But then we get to the baby boomers. Baby boomers, where are you at? Yep.

Yep. Sorry, guys. You guys are basically the hippies who ruined Western civilization. Way to go.

[1:27] And then there's Generation X. Generation X, where are you at? Oh, we have some people on the border here. Well, Generation X, you're a bunch of cynical slackers, as it goes.

And then we get to my generation, the millennials. Millennials, where are you? Yep. Uh-oh. Well, now that I've made all of you mad, what are some stereotypes about millennials? And I can take it. Come on. Selfish. Selfish.

Oh, man. Trophies for participation. I have a few of those hanging around in my closet, I'm not going to lie. Well, here's one.

We are fragile and we're easily offended, aren't we? Yeah? Our feelings are easily hurt, and there's a good chance we might just throw a tantrum about it when that happens.

[2:36] And go back to our closet with our participation trophies. Now, in our Gospel passage for today, we see the story of the Canaanite woman.

She is kind of like the anti-millennial, isn't she? If she were easily offended, she would have taken offense and left in disgust after Jesus calls her a dog. So here's an experiment for you today.

Go onto Facebook, call a millennial a dog, and see how quickly you're blocked. Or unfriended.

Yeah, don't actually do that. And if you do, don't say it was my idea.

But back to what Jesus says to the Canaanite woman. It could have left her so offended. We actually look to her response, and we realize that her response should be familiar to us, shouldn't it?

Don't we pray a paraphrase of that every single week? We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. Now, I think we'll see as we look at our text that actually, the Canaanite woman in many ways is us.

[3:49] When we look at the text, we are challenged by Jesus' words to her, and we're challenged by her response. But those are words that we need to hear.

Let's look together at our text, Matthew 15, starting with verses 21 and 22. 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.

Now, why does the text identify her as a Canaanite woman? Why does that matter? She's a Canaanite, which means, of course, that she's not a Jew.

Not only is she not a Jew, which means that she's not part of God's covenant people, it also means that she is outside of God's promises. And not only that, the Canaanites had often been enemies of God's people Israel.

[4:51] And not only that, they worshipped false gods. They were idolaters. So here is a woman who is part of an idolatrous people, who is coming to the Lord Jesus and asking Him to heal her daughter.

That's quite a bit of a stretch, isn't it, for her? She's probably unsure of how she'll be received. She's probably unsure of what the Lord Jesus, the Son of David, will think of her.

But still she comes. Why does she come? Because she trusts that this Jesus has the power to heal her daughter. To drive away the demon that is oppressing her.

And she hopes that He will have mercy. She acts on that hope, as we'll see. But what reception does she get at first?

Probably not the reception she was hoping for. We read in verse 23, But He did not answer her a word, and His disciples came and begged Him, saying, Send her away, for she's crying after us.

[6:00] So, first, Jesus doesn't say anything to her. Doesn't respond to her plea. And not only that, the disciples go a step further.

They beg Jesus to send her away. They probably think that she's annoyed, that she's bothering them, that she's bothering Jesus, that He doesn't have time for this unclean, idolatrous Canaanite woman.

And then, Jesus says something that might stump us a little bit. Verse 24, He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Now, what's up with that? We know, of course, that Jesus is the Savior, not simply of Israel, but of the world, right?

But we can see, of course, that the mission of Jesus and His disciples started with Israel first, and then spread to the nations of the world. But the Canaanite woman doesn't have the benefit of hindsight, and probably doesn't really know what he means, or if she does, she's discouraged by it.

[7:14] You'd think that she would be tempted to give up. But the incredible thing is that she doesn't. If anything, she becomes even more determined. We read in verse 25, She came and knelt before Him, saying, Lord, help me.

What do we see in her reaction? We see that she was still sure that Jesus could help her, and that she was still hopeful that He might do just that.

But then, Jesus comes back yet again, and He answered, It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

Well, that wasn't very meek and mild, was it? First glance, it looks like Jesus had said something incredibly offensive to her.

But He's not just name-calling. He's pointing it out. She's not part of God's people. She comes from a people that has been the enemy of God's people. She comes from the worship of false idols.

[8:27] She is cut off from God. She is unclean. But here's something incredible. She doesn't get mad.

She doesn't walk away in disgust. She doesn't try to defend herself. No, I'm not a dog. No, none of that. What does she do? She admits that Jesus is right.

Yes, she admits, I'm a dog. Yes, she admits, I am unclean. Yes, she admits, I have no right to come to you and ask you to heal my daughter.

Yes, she admits. But still, she clings to the mercy of Jesus, kneeling before Him, trusting that He can and will help her.

She says, verse 24, Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.

[9:30] She believes that even the crumbs from the Lord's table will be enough to help her and enough to heal her daughter. She knows that even if she eats the crumbs like a dog, that will be enough.

And she knows that she doesn't have a right to the bread. She knows that she's unclean. She knows that she's a sinner. But she knows that even still, Jesus can help her. So she puts her trust in Jesus, believing that He will at least give her the crumbs and that it will be enough.

And Jesus does help her. We read in verse 28, Then Jesus answered her, A woman great is your faith. Be it done for you as you desire.

And her daughter was healed instantly. So Jesus sees her true and complete faith in Him, her acknowledgement that yes, she is an undeserving sinner, but she sees that He is her hope.

She sees that He is our hope. What does He do? He acknowledges her faith, the kind of faith that trusts in Christ and Him alone, and He heals her daughter instantly.

[10:51] He drives away the demons instantly by His mercy and His authority. And how awesome is that? Now, this is a passage that really resonates with me.

It's one of my favorites in all of the Gospels, actually. Now, at first glance, it can be really puzzling for us. Jesus seems almost out of character.

Why is He being so harsh with her? Why doesn't He just grant her request immediately? I think that part of the answer is that what He says to the Canaanite woman and how she responds demonstrates something that you and I need to know.

The passage resonates with me because instead of getting offended by what Jesus says to the Canaanite woman, I realize that the Canaanite woman is me.

Just like her, I confess that I am an unworthy dog. Just like her, I know that my only hope is the undeserved and extravagant mercy and power of Jesus.

[12:07] How did she approach Jesus? What did she know about herself? What was her hope? The great 20th century Egyptian Christian monk, Father Matthew the Poor, had this to say about her.

He says, She knew herself, as every sinner knows himself, to be without any right to approach God. And yet she approached.

Did she have hope in any good she had done? Did she have an intercessor to plead on her behalf? Did she have a priest to offer sacrifices for her? Nothing at all.

Then what was it that strengthened her? She looked unto Christ and Christ alone. She focused all her faith, her mind, and her heart on Him.

She trusted, not because she had done anything to commend her, but because He had all things. She depended not upon her own strength, but upon His.

[13:14] She did not lean upon any promise she had, but upon the promise found in Him. She approaches Jesus for mercy, not because she's worthy, but because she knows herself to be unworthy.

She approaches Jesus with the full knowledge that she has no hope in anything that she has ever done. But she knew to hope in Christ and in Christ alone and to trust Him.

Not because of anything in her, but because of who He is. I believe with her that this is the only way that I can approach God.

What I have to admit is, Lord Jesus, I know that I am unworthy. I am a sinner. I am unclean. I am unworthy even to eat the crumbs under your table.

But I know, I know that you save the unworthy, that you can wash me clean with your blood, and only you can in your power and will in your mercy save me even though I'm unworthy.

[14:36] that is how we approach God. But, sometimes we like to think too highly of ourselves, don't we?

So many ways we can come to think we're better than other people. Hey, look at all the good things that I do. Look at what a great reputation I have. Look at all I've accomplished.

Look at all the money I have. Look at how smart I am. Look at what a great family I come from. And it can get even more ridiculous than that.

In the news, we've been seeing a lot of reports about people who demonstrate in the streets to say that they're better than other people simply because of the color of their skin.

We can find all kinds of ridiculous and false reasons to think that we're better than other people. But the Canaanite woman humbles us because if we are honest, we realize that we're no better than she is and we're no better than anyone else and that we are called to fall down and worship at the feet of the crucified and risen Lord.

[15:56] To admit that we don't deserve his grace. To admit that we aren't fit to eat the crumbs under his table. To admit that we are sinners. To admit that we have no hope in anything other than Jesus.

But to believe that his blood can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. To believe that Jesus is able and willing to save everyone who trusts in him.

To believe that the power of his death and resurrection is greater than the power of our sin. To believe that God justifies the ungodly. to believe that Christ and Christ alone is our only and our certain hope.

To believe even that no matter who we are or what we have done God's grace in Christ is enough for all who believe.

Do you admit and believe that this morning? I was recently talking with someone about that great beautiful biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone.

[17:08] That God gives salvation as a free gift to all who trust in Christ alone for salvation. And he said something to me. Something that really stuck out to me.

He told me that that's a message that actually really resonates with him because he knows that he has never done anything that could impress God. The Canaanite woman also knew she had never done anything that could impress God.

She approached Jesus in simple trust. Not because of what she had done, but because of who he is. And I pray that each one of us would approach Jesus in the same way.

Because sometimes we're tempted not to, aren't we? And that can take all kinds of forms.

Sometimes we're tempted to run and hide because we feel unworthy and we feel ashamed.

But did the Canaanite woman run and hide? No, she didn't. She approached Jesus because she believed that he would receive someone who is unclean.

[18:26] And he does. And then on the other hand, sometimes we're tempted to think highly of ourselves. As we talked about a minute ago.

But, the gospel lifts us up when we're broken, but it sure humbles us when we're proud, doesn't it? We realize that we believe in a God who saves the unclean, who will admit that they're unclean, and that Jesus is their only hope, that Jesus and Jesus alone is sufficient.

That is not a gospel that humors our self-righteousness, is it? The Canaanite woman reminds us simply and clearly of the gospel.

She reminds us that if we're honest, we're unworthy too. But she reminds us that Jesus shows mercy to those who are unworthy and put their trust in him.

Because his worth, his death, his resurrection, his power, his love are greater than our unworthiness. Now, in the sermon I quoted a minute ago, Father Matthew the poor goes on to remind us that by faith, we have the power to conquer the enemy, to conquer the devil, but only through the kind of faith that rests on nothing but Christ's righteousness and authority.

[20:03] Do you have that faith this morning? Faith that trusts in nothing but Christ, his righteousness and his authority. Trust in Jesus and know God's saving, healing, and amazing grace.

In the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit. Amen.