

Matthew 21-03-14a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. Glad you're able to join us.

And as we continue our study this morning on this 14th day of March 2021, we find ourselves reviewing, beginning in verse 21, the Gentile woman who demonstrates her faith and has her daughter healed and moving into the healing of the multitudes and the feeding of the 4,000. It's a lot to cover, so we should waste no time in getting started. Let's ask God's blessing on our study and on our time spent together as we are fed from the heavenly manna of God's word.

Shall we pray? Father, we are so grateful for another opportunity to have our souls nourished and strengthened and our viewpoint and our understanding improved as we look together at your word. We thank you for the ministry of the Holy Spirit that helps us to understand it and to see how it applies and how we should then live. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together that he, the Spirit, will be our teacher and will impress these truths on our hearts in a meaningful and effective way.

We pray that in all things this morning, the Lord Jesus will be glorified as we spend time together in worship, in fellowship, instruction, and in growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

Get my cheaters on here. As we saw last time, the Lord has been accosted by officials, the powers that be from Jerusalem have come up and challenged him, challenged him about his disciples and the fact that they don't observe the tradition of the elders the way they think they should. And we see in this section things that are very pertinent to our time.

We've noted in some detail now the tradition of the elders and what that means today. This is the humanly devised, humanly concocted, humanly approved standards of what is moral, what is right, what is proper, and the attempt by people who develop those things to inflict it on the rest of us. What is our response? Are we cowed into compliance? Are we made fearful and are we quieted and silenced? No, we're not.

We do what we do as unto the Lord heartily and not unto men. And if people are unhappy with our priorities and our values and the goals that we pursue, that's really on them. We do not live our lives to be approved.

Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. Remember this from our memory verses a few years back. He is going to be like a shrub in the desert and will not see good when it comes.

Well, as we move forward now, we find that the Canaanite woman is similarly apropos

for our time. And I don't know why, well, I do know why, but the pertinence of this is pretty apparent and profound the more you look at it. So given the events of the past year, criminal trials that have started up for behavior that has sparked riots and a movement and a social upheaval, if you will, that has centered on people's ethnicities and origins and cultures and such, this passage could not be more pertinent.

And if I were a topical pastor, I would probably pick it for this time because of its pertinence. But we have come to it in our normal course of progress through the gospel. But you remember this in Matthew 15, Matthew chapter 15, we've already seen this emphatic statement by the Lord Jesus that there are people who draw near with their mouth and honor with their lips, but their heart is far away, teaching his doctrines, the commandments of men.

And he emphasizes that people don't get to make up the rules about what defiles a man, what is righteous and unrighteous. It is the doctrines of God, the law of God that defines right and wrong, that defines propriety and morality. Well, no sooner do we have that emphasis than in verse 21 of Matthew 15, Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

This is right on the border. He has traveled Northwest from the North edge of the sea of Galilee and the regions of Capernaum and Nazareth. And he's gone up toward the Mediterranean coast.

And he is right at the very edge. He's about to cross that border. He is up in the region of Tyre and Sidon.

If you keep your finger here and flip over to the gospel of Mark, this is the parallel account. And in this journey through Matthew, we have been freely availing ourselves of the information found in the other gospels. And it is particularly pertinent here to see what Mark has to say about this circumstance, because as our verse 22 says, behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region, a woman of Canaan.

Now, Matthew is presenting Jesus as the Messiah to Israel. You remember the emphasis of each of the four gospels. Matthew presents him as the coming King.

Mark presents him as the suffering servant. Luke presents him as the son of man. John presents him as the son of God.

These are convenient summaries. There's much more to it than that in terms of theme and emphasis. But as a memory aid, it is clear that Matthew cites Old Testament prophecy, focuses on Israel, the traditions of Israel, the leadership in Israel, the problems of legalism and overemphasis of tradition and so on.

Mark is presenting the other side of Jesus, his compassion, his humanity, his role coming in the form of a servant, the likeness of a man, the form of a servant. And so when you

go to Matthew chapter 7 and verse 24 to pick up the account of this story, from there he arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon, and he entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but he could not be hidden. Jesus is traveling incognito.

He has tried to not make a spectacle or garner attention, attract attention. But it says, for, verse 25, this is Mark 7, 25, a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him, and she came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth.

She kept asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. So how many descriptions do we have of this woman now? What does Matthew say? Matthew emphasizing the Israeliteness of Israel, the Jewishness of the Messiah, the sheep of the house of Israel, and so on. So what does Matthew say about this woman? How does he denote her? She's a what? What does Matthew say? You can say it out loud.

All the vast hordes of you can say it out loud. She is a Canaanite, right? Canaanite. When's the last time there were Canaanites? This was the aggregate group of ites that Joshua conquered in the conquest.

They call it the conquest because Canaan was conquered and the Canaanites were to be wiped out. But she is a Canaanite. Now, nobody says Canaanite in Jesus' day.

It's not Canaan anymore. Why does Matthew say it? What does it speak of? What was the problem with the Canaanites? Why did God tell Israel to wipe out the Canaanites? It was their practices. It was their worship.

It was their pagan religions, worship of Molech and Ashdod and Chemosh and Dagon. Remember the Philistines were lumped in with the Canaanites as a group? They were godless pagans. So Canaanite speaks of culture.

It's a godless culture. It's a non-Israelite culture. Canaanite emphasizes culture.

Even in the modern day, if somebody thinks that you're culturally ignorant and you don't know anything about opera or ballet or art or whatever, they'll say, well, he's just a Philistine. I'm not going to tell you who said that about me, but long ago, not approving of the effete fine arts can get you called a Philistine. If you'd rather watch a football game than a ballet, you qualify as a Philistine.

Canaanite, it's culture. Look at what Mark says though. The woman was a Greek.

This is the ethnoi, the non-Israelites, the goyim, they would call them in Hebrew. Greek basically meant non-Israelite. Now this is, are you a son of Abraham? Are you connected to the 12 tribes or are you other? So in Israel, when you were filling out the census, it would say, what is your tribe? Are you tribe of Reuben, tribe of Dan, tribe of Manasseh, tribe of Gad, Issachar, or other? And here, Greek means other.

I don't fit any of the Israelite boxes whatsoever. I'm other. Greek just stood for anybody who wasn't Israelite.

The third thing that we get from Mark is a Syrophoenician. This is why we call this the story of the Syrophoenician woman. That's how it's generally titled.

And again, this is ethnicity. So this woman has three strikes against her when it comes to her origins. She is Canaanite, Goyi, Syrian Phoenician.

That's three strikes for something that is happening in Israel, for Israel, from Israel, to Israel. You miss out in three different ways. So Jesus points this out.

And you remember when we, when we covered the study last time, what does Jesus tell the disciples when this woman comes up? In verse 24 of our passage, Matthew 15, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, lost sheep of the house of Israel. So you don't qualify because your ethnicity is wrong. Your religion is wrong.

Your origin is wrong. Now, I promise you, and you do not have to stretch your imagination in any way. In our current time and in the current atmosphere, Jesus is a racist.

I will help people of one ethnicity, but not another. You don't qualify because of your birth, something over which you have no control. That's what Jesus points out here.

And there may come a day when we will not be able to discuss this story from the word of God without backlash and criticism and that charge. Jesus was a racist and because he lives, he still is a racist. Once you have committed a racist act anytime or what is perceived as such, that's the brand on you from then on, right? What is the issue Jesus makes? He doesn't say she doesn't have faith.

He doesn't say she worships the wrong God or in the wrong temple. She chose the wrong place to live. He doesn't say, well, if you hadn't had converse with idols and idolatry, your daughter wouldn't have contracted demons like a virus.

What is the issue Jesus makes? I'm sent to the house of Israel and the sheep that have been lost from it. Literally, if you translate this in Greek, it's, I am sent only for the sheep lost from the house of Israel, which changes the emphasis very slightly, but there's no getting around it. If you call a woman a Canaanite, a Syrophoenician and a Greek, you're making an issue out of the fact that she is not the right race.

She's not the right ethnicity. She's not the right culture. And Jesus says, I was only sent to those in the house of Israel.

And it gets worse. As you will remember, not only does he say, you're not the right race, but when she comes and worships him saying, Lord, help me in verse 25 of Matthew 15

or verse 26 of Mark 7, she kept asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. She came and worshiped Lord, help me.

It's interesting in Matthew 15, when she says, have mercy on me, that's an aorist tense. Come to a point, it's what's called a constative aorist. I need this mercy aimed at me.

It's a specific mercy for a specific time and a specific circumstance. So it's couched in the aorist. Have mercy on me.

This is not exactly a point in time, but it isolates the mercy as a specific that will take place. And it's the whole ball of wax looked at. Have mercy on me.

When she falls at his feet worshiping and says in verse 25, Lord, help me. This is in the present tense. Be helping me.

I need ongoing help. And she changes it from aorist to present, at least in the Greek. I suspect that she was probably speaking Aramaic as well.

She might've been speaking Greek. It's hard to know because of her origins. But Jesus says to her in our passage, it is not good.

It is not kalon. It doesn't say agathos. Agathos is the word for good.

That means, uh, good in the sense of righteous, i.e. He doesn't say it is not right to do this. Kalon means something is excellent. Something is fine.

We say that was a good book or a good concert or a good meal, but we don't mean good in the moral sense. We mean good in the qualitative sense. It was excellent.

It was fine. It was well done. Uh, it was an example of, of talent or whatever.

Kalon is the word that was used in Greek for that. K-A-L-O-N is the word that is used here. And, uh, you could translate it as, as seemly or it's, it's not a fine thing.

It's not appropriate. Um, it isn't, uh, it's not quality action to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. Now it is true that kunarion is the word for dog and kunaria is, is something of a diminutive, but it is, it's interesting to see commentators try to soften what Jesus says here.

Um, I've seen the translation. Um, it is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the little pet dogs, the little pet dogs, little makes them cute, not right to give it to the puppies. Um, and trying to raise the quality of the description of the dog.

The only quality difference here between kunarion and kunaria, uh, or, or kune, K-U-N-E as a dog and kunarion as a diminutive is there was a distinction in the ancient Near East and many places then and now between the stray dogs, the somewhat wild or, um,

untamed ones that just roamed the streets and were out there, you know, eating trash and whatnot. And the ones that people would allow into their homes. And they weren't exactly pets, but they were familiar.

They were a part of the household. Maybe they, maybe they were pets and maybe not, but there were some that, that people would allow in their house, uh, and others that they did not, you know, outsider dogs, liars, fornicators. You see that in revelation chapter 20, but, uh, here it just means the house dogs.

They're not made cute. They're not made cuddly. They're not made pet.

Um, it's not little pet dog. It's just, there are some that people don't drive out of the house when they come in. They, they tolerate them.

Maybe they were pets, maybe not, but they are still dogs. And this woman who is of the wrong origin and the wrong ethnicity, she's identified by Matthew as a Canaanite, which was an enemy of Israel is now compared in a very harsh and insensitive way by today's standards, which is why so many commentators, even in decades past, have tried to soften this and, and mute it because it strikes the modern ear as harsh. But Jesus basically says, I'm sent to make sure the children get their bread.

And you're just a house dog. And it's, it is intentionally harsh. And to try to take the edge off that harshness is to miss Jesus point.

So what is Jesus point? Let's think about this. What is he doing? Is Jesus ignoring her pleas? Because in Matthew, it says that as they were going along, uh, she cried out to him and he did not answer her a word. His disciples came and urged him saying, send her away for she cries out from behind us.

She's, Mark gives you the destination. They were traveling along and either were just entering a house or just coming out from it. Some commentators like to think that they had just had a meal in this house, that it was just sort of a house where you could get a meal.

And so the idea that there's food on the table and such might've been an immediate circumstance. Uh, it doesn't say that Jesus was going into the house or coming out of the house. Um, it, it says when he first arrived in the region of Tyre and Sidon, he entered a and wanted no one to know it.

But this woman comes and falls at his feet. He may or may not still be in the house. Matthew indicates that he is traveling and this lady is calling out from behind as they walk along.

So Jesus says in Matthew, it is not good to take the children's and throw it to the dogs. In Mark, let the children be filled first for it is not good to take the children's bread and

throw it to the dogs, the house dogs. Well, can you imagine in today's climate, if a woman of a different ethnicity were to come up to Jesus and he says, you're the wrong ethnicity.

And on top of that, I'm here for children and you're a dog. The firestorm of social media, dog piling and canceling and, and whatever else, what is Jesus doing here? Is he intentionally insulting this woman? Is he, uh, some have suggested, well, he's giving her the opportunity to demonstrate her great faith because by refusing to listen to her or acknowledge her, he answers her, not a word when she's crying out. Uh, he's giving her the chance to show her persistence and that's his intention as well.

I'm just going to ignore her so that she can keep on asking. Well, this does ascribe a kind of insensitivity to the Lord Jesus that would be uncharacteristic. And it's kind of like, uh, I saw, uh, one notion that this would be like holding a treat out for the little dog.

And as it tries to get it, you hold the treat higher and higher to see how high the dog can jump and that that would be, you know, demeaning to this woman. So what exactly is going on? Is Jesus, um, being insensitive? Is he, um, denying her just to see how long she will ask? Is he testing her faith? Is this a test to see if, if her faith is strong enough to qualify for an answer? Uh, we're going to see shortly that Jesus can heal everybody who comes with no faith test at all. What exactly is going on? Well, the key is in the details and, uh, you can turn back to Matthew.

I mainly wanted to look at Mark for the Syro-Phoenician, uh, Greek description there. And the fact that there is a house involved in Jesus didn't want anyone to know he was there. And this woman keeps on crying out.

If Jesus was really of a practical mind, he would have immediately granted her request so that she would not keep calling out and attracting more and more attention because she is, she's making such a noise that the disciples say, send her away. Now, verse 23, when it says, send her away for, she cries out after us is interesting because they don't say, uh, reject her or dismiss her or tell her to go home when they say, send her away. It's, it is cast in a neutral tone.

The disciples are basically saying, Lord, either, you know, answer her yes or answer her no, but, but give her some sort of a response, uh, so that this crying out will stop. Evidently the disciples understand that Jesus is trying to travel incognito and this is really drawing attention. And his comment therefore is going to draw attention.

I am sent only to the sheep lost from the house of Israel. So then he says, it's not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. So first of all, he doesn't speak to her at all.

Then at a certain point he does speak to her. What changed? Why does he, does he

change his mind? What is the difference? Well, what is her plea at the beginning? She says, have mercy on me. Oh Lord, son of David.

And we saw this last time, the son of David is an acknowledgement that, that he is the descendant of David and a potential claimant to the throne of Israel. And she's heard all the way up there in the regions of Tyre and Sidon, uh, both about Jesus, uh, the, the noise that is being made, the people that wanted to make him King after he fed the 5,000. Why would they do that? They found out that he's of the tribe of Judah and is qualified.

He's not just of the tribe of Judah. He's a descendant, a lineal descendant of David. Some kind of way, this information has gotten out.

And so he's qualified and there are people who want to put him on the throne and he is well known now for his miraculous power. So she says, son of David. Now you may remember a few weeks ago when I was talking about the fact that there is a lot of kingdom talk in the church and the Christians today, uh, making much of King Jesus.

I have an observation here. It is tenuous. I will tell you, I'm not, I wouldn't die for it, but do you notice that when this woman cries out to Jesus as the son of David, as the potential King of Israel, or maybe the rightful King of Israel, he does not answer her.

She is continually crying out, son of David, have mercy on me, son of David, have mercy on me. And every time she addresses him as son of David, he does not reply. You know, there are people who don't like a nickname.

And so if you call them, you call out that nickname, they won't answer. Uh, and probably rightfully so. I went to the basic school with a guy who had been at the Naval Academy and his nickname was Stinky, uh, for reasons that we won't go into, but he got to where he really didn't like that nickname, but everybody called him that.

But when we got to Quantico, um, people would say, Hey, Stinky. And he refused to answer. I don't answer to that name.

We're not mid shipment anymore. I'm a Lieutenant and I don't answer to stinky. And it probably made a difference that he also had his fiance there.

And I don't think he wanted her to know what his nickname was. Uh, but Jesus does not answer to the call son of David. This is the equivalent of her saying, King Jesus, King Jesus have mercy on me.

And he answers her, not a word. When does he answer when she falls at his feet and worships him as Lord? I, I believe this is not without significance. She is not of the right ethnicity to claim Jesus as son of David.

She's not Jewish. She's not of the house of Israel. Certainly not one of the lost sheep.

She is a, why do we get three descriptions of this? She is a Greek. She is a Syro-Phoenician Canaanite. You don't have a claim on Jesus as the son of David when you're not of the house of Israel.

So as long as she is calling to him as son of David, as long as she is saying, King Jesus, King Jesus, he does not answer. When does he answer when she falls at his feet and worships now worship? You don't worship people for being people or you shouldn't. Worship is acknowledgement of divinity.

When she comes to him as the divine one, the divine son of God, now he answers and he draws out this point. It is not right to take bread that is designated for the children and give it to those who are not children. Now, how can you quickly make this point without constructing an elaborate parable where there is a, you know, the, we three Kings have come and you're going to not take the bread from the children and give it to the, you know, the three Kings or some way to designate Gentiles.

Everyone understood that Jews in that day were racist. They didn't like Greeks. They would not go through Samaria.

Why would you not go through Samaria? They were racist. They didn't like the Samaritans because they weren't the right ethnicity. They weren't of the right descent.

And Jesus quite clearly and obviously would go right through Samaria and stop and talk to the woman at the well and all the people that came out from the city and that well, uh, Jacob's well, Jesus went through Samaria, but you remember when he sent out his disciples and he said, do not go to Samaria. Why? What was the message? The message is change your mind. The kingdom is at hand.

The kingdom message is not for the goyim. It's not for the ethnoid. It is not for the Greeks, not for the Syrophoenicians, not for the Canaanites.

This is a call to the citizens of the kingdom to get ready to receive that kingdom and its King. It's a specific call to a specific target audience. It isn't racist.

It is nationalist. This is for the nation of Israel. And it is a specific message to citizens, not non-citizens.

Citizens, citizenship in Israel was a right of birth, kind of like it is in this country. There were those who could proselyte and become Israelites by coming to Israel, coming to the God of Israel, coming to the law of Israel and marrying in or proselyting in. But there was a procedure.

There was a mikvah. There was a baptism. There was a marriage.

There was something that qualified one to be a citizen. All of these are modern day issues, aren't they? Who is and isn't a citizen, who has a right or not a claim on the things that belong to the nation, benefits, help, care and whatnot? Who has a claim on those things? I'm here to tell you, biblically speaking, that in Jesus' view, there are things that are for the nation and the citizens of the nation, and there are things that are not. If you are going to receive those benefits, if you are going to receive mercy, if you are going to receive that present tense help, it has to be claimed on a different basis.

Just as a quick example, do we have international aid that we send out to countries that are ravaged by famine, storms, typhoons? We do that, and it's a legitimate thing to do, but we don't do it as a benefit of American citizenship, do we? Or someone who wants to be treated like a citizen when they are not. We have a different way of benefiting people who are not citizens. We don't treat them like citizens.

We don't blur the line between who is a citizen and who isn't. The Lord Jesus doesn't either. So long as she is trying to claim him as king, he does not answer.

When she worships him as Lord, he answers. But he clarifies, look, my mission here, I would want to make it clear. I am here to put bread on the table for the children.

And when he basically says, you're like the house dog, and it wouldn't be a fine thing, it's not the excellent thing. Remember in Romans 12, 2, understand what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, good, better, and best? Kahlon is the better. I show you a better way.

I show you a more excellent way. So it's not the best thing to take the bread designated for the children and give it to the little dogs. And it is a way of designating two different categories of hungry creatures in the same room.

It's not designed to be denigrating or harsh. It's designed to draw a distinction. There are those who the meal is prepared for and those who benefit because there is a household and there is a table and there are children.

There are blessings by association with that, that extend to others outside that formal circle. And I want to close on this note, our first session. Think about this woman and think about the attitudes that are prevalent and vocally visibly expressed in our culture today by some.

If this woman got in a huff because Jesus wouldn't talk to her, she calls out to him and he doesn't immediately stop and turn around and say, oh ma'am, how are you today? What can I do for you? I so appreciate the fact that you recognize me as the son of David. And I certainly want to be courteous and sensitive to your needs. And here you are with this problem and let's all put a shoulder under this load.

And I've got 12 other guys here. Maybe the 13 of us can all work together to try to find a

solution for your problem and lift you up and comfort you and encourage you and help you in this time of crisis. Jesus doesn't say a word and doesn't even turn around.

And you could say, well, he's seeing how long, you know, it's like the woman, the importunate widow who keeps pestering the judge. That's not it at all. She is approaching on a faulty basis.

And he knows that if she thinks about it long enough, she will figure this out. And she does figure it out. And when he says to his disciples, I'm sure he said this without turning around loud enough for her to hear.

I am sent only to the sheep lost from the house of Israel. When she hears that, this woman thinks, she thinks about the words of the Lord. Ah, calling him son of David is not my privilege.

I am not a sheep lost or otherwise of the house of Israel. I'm approaching on the wrong basis. Why is it this man is able to heal? Not because he's the potential or future or rightful king of Israel with kingdom blessings in store.

He is able to do these things for the same reason. Nicodemus said in John chapter three, you're from God. That's the basis on which I can approach.

And so she changes her tack. And she says, Lord, instead of son of David, and she falls at his feet and worships. Now Jesus has made the distinction between what is aimed at Israel, which is the kingdom, kingdom, blessings, kingdom promises.

Go tell John what you have seen. This is the fulfillment of old Testament promises related to the kingdom for Israel. Go tell John the Baptist, what you have seen the blind see the lame walk, the deaf hear gospel is preached to the poor, the gospel, the good news of the kingdom.

See the difference. And this woman has the smarts, has the faith to recognize that there is another avenue of approach that does not depend on the promises to Israel. It depends on the compassion of the son of God.

And she makes a direct appeal, be helping me. She changes from have mercy, Elias, to be helping me. And instead of a package of mercy, she is going to receive an ongoing help because he's not just the son of David.

He is the son of God. And as an ethnos, as a Greek, as a Syrophoenician, as a Canaanite, this is her legitimate avenue of appeal and approach. And Jesus says, you figured it out.

That's faith. That's what I'm looking for. Let it be to you according to your word.

So we need to pause here and take our break. But something to think about, not the least of which is the woman does not get hung up on. Was he courteous enough? Was he

sensitive enough? Did he respect my ethnicity enough? Do I have a chip on my shoulder because I'm Syrophoenician and not Jewish? You're making an issue out of Jewishness.

Oh, you're a bad man. You're insensitive. You're a racist.

You're a Jewish nationalist. This woman sees past these shallow and faulty perceptions to the real issue. That's what faith does.

Faith penetrates past the superficial, past the humanly concocted traditions of men to the work of God and specifically the work of God in Christ. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to move on and see this principle as it is expressed and revealed in his interaction with this Canaanite Syrophoenician Greek woman in what follows in the healing of the multitudes and the feeding of the 4,000.

But let's pause here and take our break.