

March 4, 2018

“Looking to Jesus”
Matthew 15:21-28

FCF: The fullness of Jesus. Our surprises with Jesus.

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus, the Son of David, is our one true hope.
(magnet) And we must look to Him.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

It’s the stuff of science fiction storylines. A being from another dimension comes to pay a visit. Creatures accustomed to a 2-D flatness encounter another from a 3-D fullness. The 2-D beings can see but a part, a small portion, a mere plane, of this visitor. They cannot possibly take him in. They cannot comprehend him. And it is foolish to think they can. He is just too great.

It’s something like that with Jesus. Ours is the flatness. His is the fullness. We cannot possibly take Him in or comprehend Him. It’s foolish to think we can. He is just too great. Too often we come to the Bible with flat ideas of who Jesus is. Texts like this tend to blow that up.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Matthew 15:21-28](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

You learn a lot about a person in how they respond to a need. I think back to our first weeks at seminary in St. Louis. It’s a long story but Sarah and I had our own personal housing crisis, needing a new place to live. One evening, just at the start of the semester, we were at a reception for new students, their spouses, and the faculty. And I was introduced to Jerram Barrs. I had heard a bit about him. He had served for years with Francis Schaeffer and was known even then for his insight on a host of subjects. So here’s little me talking with him. And this is what Jerram said to me. “I’ve heard about your dilemma. Is there anything I can do to help?”

You learn a lot about a person in how they respond to a need. Which brings me to the encounter between Jesus and this Canaanite woman. We’re not sure of what she knew and how she knew it. But she addresses Jesus as “Lord” - at the least an expression of respect - and “Son of David” - referring to the Jewish hope of a deliverer from the line of David, a long-awaited figure with a royal scepter and healing hands. Whatever she knew, she was counting on that.

We need to do the same. For Jesus, the Son of David, is our one true hope. And we need to look to Him. That comes out in at least these three ways in our text. The need to look to Jesus for mercy. The need to look to Jesus for faith. And, finally, the need to look to Jesus for love.

I. FOR MERCY

First, we need to look to Jesus for mercy. We see that so clearly in what Jesus does.

A) Her Need

1. A demon

Think about this woman’s need. She is facing a demon, the reality of evil forces in the spiritual realm. There’s no confusion here between this and illness. Though one can lead to the other.

2. Her daughter

And this is deeply personal. This is not a stranger or even a neighbor. It's her daughter.

B) Her Cry

1. Persistent

And so she cries out (**READ Matthew 15:22b-23**). This is a persistent plea. So much so that the disciples themselves beg Jesus to do something for her just so that they can have some relief.

2. Pursuit

She is persistent in her cry and pursuit, unwilling to be put off and is undeterred by Jesus' silence and resistance. So she presses. And the only One who could act does and the child is healed.

This woman looked to Jesus for mercy. And we must look to Him for the same.

Application:

For our need is far greater than we know. Coming with our "Sunday best" is an illusion. It might do us good to set aside one week to come in our "Sunday worst" just to be more honest. We mustn't think, "Her need was extreme. She's an exception. That's why she needed Jesus." No, her need is just more obvious. It's not any greater. All of us need to see ourselves in her.

Jesus, the Son of David, is our one true hope. We must look to Him for mercy.

II. FOR FAITH

And not only that but faith as well. Stronger faith. We hear that in what Jesus says.

A) His Response

1. Initial silence

Think of His response. At first, Jesus says nothing, just ignoring her. Which is so surprising.

2. Puzzling words

After the silence come these puzzling words (**READ Matthew 15:24**). This is His mission, the plan of redemption - through and to Israel, then to the nations. (**READ Matthew 15:25-26**) Jews did refer to Gentiles as dogs. But Jesus does something interesting. The word He uses is not for strays but pets. So what's going on here? He seems to be closing the door but leaves it cracked.

B) His Reasons

1. To test her faith

Why? Likely, to test her faith. He's putting obstacles in front of her, building in resistance.

2. To strengthen her faith

Why? To strengthen her faith. To draw her out, to force her to keep pressing further in.

3. To praise her faith

Why? To praise her faith (**READ Matthew 15:27-28**). All there heard His high praise of her.

Jesus was intent on building stronger faith in her. We need to look to Him to do the same.

Illustration:

Think of it this way. In marriage, many just give up too soon. You have to stick it out in those first hard years. You have to push through. The struggle is normal. The best is coming.

Application:

We all have struggles of faith. We all have times of uncertainty, questions, and doubt. That's normal. And it's so tempting to give up. Jesus seems to be so silent. But we need to push through. That is not the time to give up. That is the time to cry out, to press into Him. And wait.

Jesus, the Son of David, is our one true hope. We must look to Him for stronger faith.

III. FOR LOVE

Which brings us to this last point - the need to look to Jesus for love, for greater love to others. And we see this as we think about the party watching all this unfold - the disciples.

A) Setting Them Up

1. The animosity they felt

Jesus is setting them up. He knows the animosity in their hearts. She is a Canaanite from Tyre and Sidon. These were major enemies of Israel in OT times, known for their Baal worship.

2. The way He seemed to respond

And so the way He seemed to respond to her is just what they would have done and wanted to see. In fact, they are likely expecting Jesus to verbally blast her. But instead He blesses her.

B) Sending Them Out

1. Their mission

What's going on here? He sets them up in order to send them out. Their mission will be to go to all the world, to all outsiders, knowing He gladly hears anyone who cries out to Him in faith.

2. Their prejudice

But to prepare them for their mission, He has to challenge their prejudices. You see, Jesus was delaying the healing not just for this woman's sake but for the disciples'. To tear down the walls.

Jesus was intent on building greater love in them. We must look to Him to do the same.

Application:

That our hearts would be larger, our welcome and love more expansive, we need to cast our eyes on His love towards us. That's the answer. To love this way we must love as we have been loved. And are loved. We must see and savor how we are loved in Christ. We deserve the very treatment the disciples thought this woman was getting. But we receive the same welcome.

Jesus, the Son of David, is our one true hope. We must look to Him for greater love.

CONCLUSION:

We have to emphasize this point because of the danger of chasing after a mirage. From a scientific standpoint, a mirage is an optical illusion caused by certain atmospheric conditions at times creating the appearance of a sheet of water in a desert. It's merely a refraction of light.

But it's also a great plot device. Think of the times we've seen this. Weary travelers in a desert, thirsty and struggling to survive, drawn to what looks to be a pool of water up ahead. If it's real, great, they're saved. But if it's not, then chasing after it will just make things worse.

My friends, we are the weary travelers in a dry land, longing for something to quench our thirst. We need to be wary of the mirages, the false hopes and empty promises shimmering out on the horizon. For Jesus, the Son of David, is our one true hope. And we must look to Him.

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