**Matthew 15:10-28 – 2023**

**Videolink:** [**https://youtu.be/XL9KVbWW9cI**](https://youtu.be/XL9KVbWW9cI)

Have you ever felt like God is ignoring you? Like you have prayed and prayed, and God did not seem to hear you? Maybe what you prayed for was very important. Maybe it was for something that would make a very big difference to your life or to the life of someone very important to you. Maybe you are still praying, and God still seems to be silent.

One day when Jesus and his disciples were in the region of Tyre and Sidon, a Canaanite woman came to Jesus. Crying out to him for mercy. Not on her own behalf, but for the sake of her daughter, who was suffering terribly. She called out “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus, who we know is full of compassion and mercy. Who we know loves us so much that he gave up his life for us, is silent. He does not say a single word to the woman.

Maybe you too have had such times. Times when you felt like God is your last hope. Maybe in desperation, you kept praying to God even though he seemed to be deaf to your cries for mercy and would not even acknowledge you.

Most of us who have been going to church all our lives, know that God is kind and merciful and full of compassion. We know God wants what is best for us and deep down we have an expectation that God will help us when we call to him for help.

When help doesn’t seem to come. When God seems to be silent it can be very hard for us to understand and to come to terms with. We may begin to look for reasons why God is not responding. We reason that maybe we have done something wrong, and God is punishing us. Perhaps we don’t measure up to God’s expectations and we don’t deserve God’s mercy.

Maybe it is worse than that. Maybe we have got God all wrong and God doesn’t care.

When Jesus doesn’t respond the woman begins crying out to his disciples. Do they help her? Do they respond with compassion and mercy, maybe ask Jesus if he can help her? Isn’t that what you would expect the disciples of Jesus to do?

Well, she wasn’t one of them. She wasn’t one of God’s people. She was a gentile living in a pagan land, probably worshipping foreign gods. A person with different beliefs, different customs, some of those customs even offensive to the disciples.

How would we respond to someone who came to us who is different? Someone whose lifestyle we struggle to come to terms with, maybe even find offensive? Would we show them the same compassion and mercy as we would show someone who is just like us?

The disciples say to Jesus, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us” (vs23). No compassion, no mercy. Then Jesus responds. He says, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (vs 24).

Some people give up when God seems to be ignoring them. They stop believing, stop praying, stop hoping. Jesus makes it clear to the woman that she has no claim on him and does not deserve anything from him. She also knows that there are no doctors who can help. She knows her pagan gods cannot help. This woman is determined to find help for her daughter, and she believes Jesus can help her.

Before Jesus went to the region of Tyre and Sidon, he had been approached by some Pharisees and teachers of the law who made accusations about his disciples not following certain customs. At the same time, these religious authorities were twisting the rules to avoid their obligations of taking care of their own parents.

Jesus makes the point that the most important thing is not the customs you keep or don’t keep but what is in your heart. He says, “out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander” (vs 19). Jesus is far more interested in what is in a person’s heart than what can be seen on the outside.

The Canaanite woman’s heart is full of faith. She trusts that even though Jesus owes her nothing. Even though she has no claim on Jesus, that he will show her mercy. She trusts that Jesus is kind, compassionate, merciful, and full of power. After all, she only wants a few crumbs. A few crumbs will be enough to heal her daughter.

Instead of giving up on Jesus and walking away, she doubles down and pleads her case before Jesus. Jesus can see what is in the woman’s heart. He can see her faith in him, her belief that he is compassionate and merciful, and he is moved to respond. “’Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’ And her daughter was healed instantly” (vs 28).

We have an advantage over the woman who asked Jesus for mercy. We know the length, depth, and breadth of his love for us. We know that he endured betrayal, rejection, suffering and being hung on a cross for us. We know that he endured being abandoned by God the Father and dying for us. We know that he died for all people no matter what their colour, creed or customs.

Knowing to what lengths Jesus went for us we too can pray with confidence, knowing that he does hear us, he does listen to us and does have mercy on us. He is prepared to give us far more than mere morsels from the master’s table. He even gives us his body and his blood and with it comes life in all its fullness now and life eternal with him.

Amen

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz