

Grace Lutheran Community, 20 August 2023:

Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

The sermon text for today is based on

Matthew 15:10-28

Do you find that you constantly think that life is difficult? Challenging perhaps or when you seem to just be getting on top of things, something else goes wrong? Then even the small things that would never have frustrated you in the past now really get to you. Or is it just that the shops have far more people to serve and far less staff who seem to want to serve you?

We as humans want easy. We want a life that we can set on cruise control and just coast along until the Lord comes to take us to be with Him one day for eternity.

Yet life is not like that and Jesus certainly is not like that – our Saviour who just lets us to coast along only serving ourselves.

‘Are you still so dull?’ Jesus asked them. ‘Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.’

Jesus cannot highlight enough that life is about the heart, not the physical heart only but the heart of our desires and in turn the heart of our sin as we like to serve our self.

If life were just about washing our hands so our bodies were not made unclean and sinful, and don't get me wrong we need to wash our hands, but if it were just so simple that washing our hands would keep our body and our heart clean wouldn't that be easy. But it is the heart that is the problem.

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. The land of the gentiles and the land of those who might have been considered unclean by the sheep of Israel.

Now our text takes an amazing turn. It was straight forward until now. Our hearts are the source of our sin, our hearts apart from Jesus, but now A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.' Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.'

Here this woman, this woman who was seen as unclean by virtue of her ethnicity cries out to the Son of David to have mercy on her, for the pain she is feeling and her suffering for her daughter's suffering is her pain and suffering as well.

But this part of our text is something then of the unexpected. Jesus does not answer her and even in some ways confirms the request of

the disciples to send her away as Jesus says He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. But this doesn't stop the woman.

Have a look at what she does next.

The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said.

This unclean woman in the eyes of the sheep of Israel came and shared more about the character of Jesus than any one of the disciples. She calls Jesus Son of David, the messiah and now she bows down at Jesus' feet.

She bows before the king, the king of kings and the one who has authority and power over her and over all things.

The disciples do they not know the power of Jesus or that He is the true king and yet here this woman seems to know. Had news spread so much of Jesus into the gentile land and this woman taking perhaps what she heard and trusting the power and authority of Jesus to fall at His feet and ask, Jesus help me.

Jesus replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.' 'Yes it is, Lord,' she said. 'Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.'

Jesus pushes her and again mentions the purpose He was sent, for the children of Israel but notice the woman only wants the bits that are tossed away or dropped without concern of those eating to the floor where the dogs, the unclean can snatch a crumb. This woman knows that even just a crumb would fully feed and satisfy her request

and that her daughter would be healed with the tiniest bit of Jesus word and in that tiny morsel the power to save, to renew and to heal.

Then Jesus said to her, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Now the heart is shown. The heart of this woman is a heart of faith in Jesus.

We are made clean by believing in Jesus, our hearts are changed and renewed by the power of our Lord. We receive all He offers by faith and our hearts are no longer our own but our hearts are for the Lord.

How often do we judge others by standards and subtly put ourselves above them in our hearts because we keep the rules better or the standards that we set far better than those of other views or birthplaces? Yet Jesus died for all and He came to give sight to the blind and to set the captives free from sin.

Let us ask our lord for all we need and ask knowing in our hearts that even the smallest gift from our Lord has power to change our lives as we live to serve others in His name.

Amen