

Sunday Summary

Matthew 15:21-28

This story exemplifies the form of argument that was common in Jesus' day. The argument was carried on by citing proverbs. The person who cited the best proverb was recognized as the winner.

In Matthew's gospel, the focus of Jesus' mission has till now been only to Israel (10:5). So when this woman comes and kneels before him requesting help for her daughter, he first refuses her request by appealing to the commonsense wisdom of a proverb: should the children's bread, one of the essentials of life and thus a symbol for salvation (14:15-21) be given to the dogs?

The woman's quick-witted reply exemplifies the kind of verbal acumen admired in the Middle East. She is not satisfied with his reply and responds with another proverb, reinforcing her request by citing a different proverb that reframes the whole situation: even the puppies get the scraps that are leftovers. Jesus, realizing that in this argument her proverb outdoes his, recognizes her triumph by acclaiming her faith and healing her daughter as she had requested.

Weekly Reflection



Those of us who like our stories about Jesus to be sweet and neat are likely to choke on today's gospel. A Canaanite woman comes to Jesus and begs, "Lord, heal my daughter." And what does Jesus, that gentle Savior, do? First he ignores her. Then he explains that as an outcast—"dog" is the word he actually uses—she is not entitled to his services. Finally, he grants her request.

Jesus is not gentle here, either to the disciples or the woman herself. But he makes clear where his own heart lies when he turns to the woman, honors her faith and grants her request.

Now we, of course, have no problem with Canaanite women. But if we think we know no outcasts, we have not listened closely to the homeless, to the terminally ill, or to people of every class, color and sexual orientation who have found themselves shut out from everyday life by those whose circumstances are different. See, they follow us and they will not be hushed. We may plead, "Lord, do something," but Jesus turns in silence to us. What will we do?



Food for Thought

❖ What one command of Christ's might we use to symbolize obedience to Jesus' new covenant?



Food for Thought

❖ How do the Canaanite woman's attitude and actions define faith?

Bridges for Tridgers

Recipe for Awareness

Begin with a moment of centering silence and quiet reflection, setting aside the concerns and agenda of the day.

1 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our family.

"Dear God, who is present with our family now, and at all times and in all ways..."

Continue with:

2 We express our gratitude for today's gifts from God.

"Today I give thanks for..." or,
"Today, I am grateful for..."

Pause again for another moment of centering silence and quiet reflection.

3 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our own experience.

Silently contemplate the question:
"When have I acted from love?"

Silently contemplate the question:
"When have I acted from fear?"

Based on your contemplation, create your intention to move forward as an expression of God's Love.

4 We plan and move forward with God.

"God, help me to manifest your presence today by..."

Invitations to Community

- In today's gospel, Jesus commends the Canaanite woman for her perseverance and faith. How might we have allowed apathy to replace zeal in our friendships? our families? our relationship with God? Pray that our hearts may be renewed, that we too may seek all the blessings Jesus stands ready to give.

Suggestions for Families

Read Matthew 15:21-28. Discuss healing: What stories of healing do we know? What power to heal do we expect to find in Jesus? Ask each family member to draw a picture showing his or her feelings about healing.

If you're feeling courageous, in your family discussions invite members to a round of circular questions. Begin by asking one member "In what situations would you imagine the person to your left feels like an outcast?" After each person has had a chance to offer their assumptions, invite further clarifying conversation. Were the perceptions grounded or not?

Prayer Starter

Jesus, give me your own merciful heart with which to love others...

