**More than Enough Grace to Get the Job Done**

Based on [Matthew 15:21-28](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt15.21-28)

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Today’s Gospel lesson is an example of the modus operandi of God; that he works all things by grace through faith. Jesus himself displays this in his dealings with a Canaanite woman who comes to him for help. There are a couple of things you need to know understand what’s going on here.

First, God the Father sent Jesus only to the Jews. From the time of his conception and birth of the virgin Mary, through his suffering, death and resurrection until he ascended bodily into heaven, Jesus’ ministry and mission was to his own people, God’s chosen people the Jews. When Jesus goes out to teach people and to do miracles, he does so only in the regions of Judea and Galilee, where the true Israelites resided. There were two other regions that Jesus went to, Samaria and Phonecia. These were gentile territories, not Jewish, and so Jesus never went there to do ministry. But you may remember he did pass through Samaria, he had to travel from Galilee to Judea and back, just like would have to travel through Saskatchewan to get to Manitoba. And he also went to Phonecia, what the gospel today calls “the district of Tyre and Sidon.” But he didn’t go there to minister, to teach or to heal. He “withdrew” to there, in a sort of respite. According to his humanity and humility, Jesus needed rest, just as you and I need rest from time to time. And from the beginning God knew man needed rest, that’s why he gave us the Sabbath day. To rest is human, Jesus is human, therefore Jesus rests.

He went to phonecia to rest, when a Caananite woman came out to him and was crying for help. She was not a Jew, and Jesus was not sent to preach and minister to her. The disciples seemed to know this; they told Jesus to send her away, but this might have simply been out of annoyance. Jesus gives no sign of annoyance, but does affirm to them this simple truth: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This shows his obedience to his Father’s plan. All feelings aside, all circumstances aside, all things aside, the simple truth is that God did not send Jesus to minister to Gentiles; only to the Jews…to Galilee and Judea. That was his calling, and it ought to remind us of how we are to regard ours. Employees, your boss did not hire you to do whatever you think is important. Representatives, your constituents did not elect you to ignore their instructions and do what is right in their own eyes. As servants of higher authorities, we are given instructions to follow and to deviate from them is a careless frolic, a dereliction of duty.

The District President in the LCC has a job to facilitate the membership applications willing congregation to the soonest church-wide Convention. Glenn Schaeffer has decided that--in our case--his job is not to bring willing Confessional Lutheran congregations to the church, but to screen certain congregations from the Church. In this, he has broken faith with the people who elected him, and he has abused his authority. But Jesus, he is cognizant of the fact that, for the three years of his earthly ministry, he was given authority only to accomplish a particular ministry to a particular people. And not even Jesus, God himself in the flesh, is presumptuous enough to go against his mandate from the Father, and arrogate himself new powers. He is faithful and just, doing his job and trusting in the plan and providence of his Father in heaven.

Jesus reminds himself and his disciples of his mandate. “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Nevertheless, though he did not answer her at first, she did not give up or turn away. She knew Jesus was Lord, and that only he could help her situation. Her daughter was demon possessed and Jesus was there in the flesh with the power to help. How shameful it is when, out of sheer pride and arrogance, people refuse to beg for help from those who can provide it. This Caananite had no such pride, she knew she was a beggar, and that she could not pay Jesus to help her, coerce him, bribe him. She could get offended and protest, but how pathetic for someone to protest for something they have no right to receive, that’s pouting, but she did not pout either. She simply asked the giver of all good things to freely, by grace, give his help to her demon-oppressed daughter. She says simply, “Lord, help me”…Lord have mercy.

Jesus still doesn’t agree to help, but repeats his mandate to her in metaphor. “**It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” In other words, he says “My father in heaven has prepared a feast of teaching and healing for his children, the Jews. It is outside of my mandate to give that wonderful feast for his children to the house dogs.**” Yes, Jesus calls her a dog and that could be taken as offensive. But the metaphor is just simply a picture language way of summarizing the truth. “I was sent to prepare a feast to feed the Jews, not gentiles like you.” But her response is one of the most amazing things in the gospel. She didn’t get offended and walk away; she didn’t simply think “oh, he means for me to go away” and walk away. No, she engages Jesus’ words…she takes him at what he said.

Jesus didn’t say “No, I won’t help you. I don’t have time for the likes of you.” Neither did he say “My Father in heaven forbids me to help you.” All he did was state a plain truth from God, “I was sent to help Jews, not you.” And she doesn’t contradict him. Instead she accepts what he says, and says more back. She said, **“Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”** In other words she says, “Yes Lord, you were only sent to them…but your grace is so ample, your gifts are so great, your provision for your people is so superabundant that their cup overflows. In you, God has prepared a feast for his people, and no good host runs out of food, but prepares enough so that everyone may eat and be satisfied.

They say that in some parts of Europe it is bad manners to clean your plate; because what it says is that the host didn’t make you enough food. But when Jesus fed the five thousand, his disciples gathered up twelve baskets full of leftovers. Scraps. Where this woman heard of Jesus in order to believe and make such a great and accurate confession of his grace, we don’t know. But we do know that she came to such faith ultimately because the Father in heaven revealed Jesus to her heart through the Spirit. She knew that Christ came with an abundance of grace, so that if the people he was sent to were to starve, it is simply because they refuse to eat. And that is in a sense true. John says, “He came to his own people, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:11).

Maybe the woman also knew how ungrateful the Jews were to Jesus, that the messiah was in their midst and they were not appreciating who is was and what he was offering; and so she would gladly lap up what they throw out. Maybe. In either case, she seemed to know that Jesus would not be violating his Father’s mandate to the Jews, if he would simply throw her a little bone. Was Jesus confused, or ignorant of this fact? No. But Jesus knows that faith never contradicts Gods word, which is all he spoke to her. “I was sent to the Jews.”

It’s a sign of maturity when children begin to do this. “**Can I play with sister Suzie’s doll?**” No, it belongs to Suzy not you. “**But I want it**” is not a good response. It ignores the fact that it is Suzie’s Doll. “Suzy plays with my toys without asking all the time” Once again it’s still Suzies doll, it belongs to her and Two wrongs don’t make a right. When a child says, “But Suzie should share” there is an appropriate response, it doesn’t try and deny the truth of ownership for selfish gain, instead it is a sign of maturity. “Yes it’s Suzies doll, this is true. But it can still remain her doll while I play with it, if only she will be kind and share as she ought to.” Very well, you are right, it is her doll, but she should share, especially if she’s not playing with it right now. Lets go ask Suzie if she will let you borrow it for a while.

Jesus says, very well, you are right. My helping your daughter in no way depletes my grace towards the Jews to whom my Father sent me. What great faith you have. You do not argue my Father’s plan, but instead, in humility, demonstrate that you always believe God’s Word, even when it goes against your interests. And it also shows you know who I am, your Lord and your God, the source of all grace and the provider of every Good thing. You know who I am and so you come to me, confidently knowing that what you ask in faith will not be denied you. Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

One more matter is worth addressing here. Maybe in hearing this gospel you have been thinking, “Jesus was not sent to her??? Not his mandate from the Father??? What do you mean??? Jesus was sent to save *all people*, die for *all people*, love *all people*, draw *all people* to himself.” The answer is…Yes and no. Yes he is for all people, and the rightful God and king of all people, but his three year mission and ministry was only to Israel. Only after his mission was over did he give to his apostles what is usually called “the Great Commission.” *After* he fulfilled his ministry to Israel, he commissioned his disciples and said to them, “**Go and make disciples of all nations.**”

Jesus was not in Phonecia to teach and heal Phonecians. He was there to rest. But one thing we know about the Son of Man is that he has no place to rest his head. When Jesus heard his friend, John the Baptist, had died he withdrew to a desolate place by himself. **But the crowds saw him and followed him. And when he saw them, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.** When Jesus was passing from Galilee to Judea, he went through a village in Samaria. And there he was met by ten lepers who said, “Jesus, master, have mercy on us.” And he had mercy on them and healed them. The point being, though it seems strange to us, Jesus was sometimes on duty and off duty according to God’s command. Jesus was given certain regions to teach in and not others, certain people to heal and not others. The only difference though, is that when he’s off duty, when he is in the presence of people he was not sent to, they call on him, follow him. They ask and seek, knock and find and he will always answer, heal, love, forgive, and save.

So too should we ask, seek, knock and the God of all grace will answer. We come to the altar every week to receive the bread from his table, his own body and blood that we receive as beggars, a handout from a gracious God who has paid for our sins and saved us. He has sent his own Son who is a testament to his love for us, and his desire to help us and give us every good thing by his grace, to be received by faith.