**No Entitlement to Grace**

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

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Second Sunday in Lent ~ Reminiscere

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Last fall, after the provincial election, I received a general email from the Student Body President of the University. With the governments cuts to educational funding, tuition was going to go up. The email wasn’t a call to discuss our thoughts on the matter. It wasn’t to see what the student body of the university thought, or what I, as a student with a voice thought. It was ***assumed*** that every student thought the tuition hike was a grave injustice, and that to have to pay a cent more for post-secondary education was evidence of the new governments malice. What struck me was the unquestionable assumption of entitlement. It’s not that low tuition was simply a benefit students had been blessed to received for the past few years, it was something they deserved. And to raise it, regardless of the reason, was to deny them their rights.

This is a worldly matter, and I bring it up only to make point about entitlement. It is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which the notion of entitlement has undermined the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ day, and even until recently in human history, entitlement was something for the rich and privileged of society. A person’s name or title meant that they deserved certain things that other human beings didn’t. The rich had control over certain lands, and had a right to vote and even to petition for change in society. And more than that, they had a right to their wealth and prestige. It was in this context that Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

And with this warning from Jesus, you might think that a christian society would get rid of the notion of entitlement. After all, we pray that God would give us our daily bread. And even though we know he will give it to people, even without prayer, we ask for it in prayer. Because we are not entitled to it, but we are all beggars. And everything from the food we eat to the air we breath is not ours by right, but because of the graciousness of God. We are entitled to nothing, but God gives us everything out of love.

Flash forward to 2020, and the genius of Satan is revealed for all to see. It is hard for the rich, the entitled, to enter the kingdom of God. And so what has the prince of this world done? Even though he hates us all with a vengeance, and wishes that we would have nothing, he has ensured that this world, which is under his power has spread this fake gospel of entitlement to all. In Jesus’ day, it was hard for the rich to be saved; so today society says that everyone is entitled to be rich. Everyone is entitled to health care, a wage. Everyone has a right to be called by whatever pronoun they want, and use whatever bathroom they choose. These are just examples, but the point is simple. In Jesus day it was hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, so satan has turned society and made us all rich. He has made us all hear constantly that we deserve all good things.

The gospel is not that we deserve good things. It is the opposite. It is that we receive good things from God, not because we deserve them or have a right to them, but because He is gracious and merciful. And the difference between deserving grace and not deserving it is the difference between heaven and hell, life and death, law and gospel.

Jesus came to his own, the Jews, and they did not receive him. Why? Because they could not bear the idea that they didn’t deserve salvation, but that they needed to receive it by sheer grace and mercy, just like the gentiles.

Consider what John the Baptist had to say to the pharisees who came to the Jordan when he was baptizing with a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He said to them, “Do not presume to say, ‘we have abraham as our father’. In other words, do not say that we don’t need to beg for salvation from God, because we are ***entitled*** to it. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that means all that anyone is entitled to, even those who are baptized and have faith in Jesus Christ--all you are entitled to is wrath, death and hell. ----- So be careful in claiming your rights!

Now you should be able to understand what’s going on in today’s gospel lesson. A woman who is a gentile, one who is not a priveledged Jew, one who everyone would agree is not ***entitled*** to the kingdom of God, comes to Jesus and asks him to save her daughter. She calls out to him and his disciples, who were not rich or esteemed Jews, but Jews nonetheless told him to send her away. And he plays along. They believe they are entitled to the messiah, but that she is not. Jesus doesn’t correct them, but plays along with their assumption. And she proves that she understands the gospel in the way his disciples, and all Jews don’t. Jesus says to her that she’s not entitled to his grace and mercy, and she responds that she’s not entitled, but would ask for his mercy anyway by grace.

By grace. That means without deserving it. Without being entitled to it. The Jews thought they were entitled to salvation. Not all of them, but that was the result of two thousand years of being God’s chosen people...they began to forget that they were chosen, not because of their greatness, but by God’s undeserved grace.

My children love movies, as most children do. And so, sometimes, we let them watch and play them. Once we let them, they think they are entitled. No movie for weeks...they occasionally will ask, so sweetly, for a movie. But as soon as we let them watch a movie, for the next little while they ask for more. And the asking is different. They ask with more insistence and persistence. Once they have received a good thing, almost immediately they think they are entitled to it again whenever they ask.

So it is with all sinners. We so easily forget that our salvation is a gift, not an entitlement. And anyone who is conscious of what it means to be a part of a church today can see this clearly. People who are baptized in the church in infancy, believe they are entitled to be married in the church and receive communion there, even if they live openly sinful lives, and only attend occasionally. “This is my church” they exclaim, though they don’t attend it, and know nothing about other members of it. I have told people that I won’t marry them unless they make a commitment to attend church regularly. In this day and age of entitlement...how do you think that went?

Once, the idea of entitlement was only for the rich. Now, in these last days, it has been extended to all people, and it has made a society who is unprepared to receive grace in faith.

But Jesus said to the canaanite woman, I won’t save your daughter because you’re not entitled to my salvation. And she doesn’t huff and puff and seeth and slander. She doesn’t get offended, because she doesn’t feel entitled. Jesus sends pharisees away, but he welcomes sinners and the difference is entitlement. The canaanite woman says, “Yes lord, I’m not entitled to eat at your table, but that doesn’t mean you can’t feed me. So I will ask again for your grace.” And she receives it. She begs, not for her rights or entitlements, but for grace. And he gives it, and he compliments her great faith.

May we learn from this example, the great gift of salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ. None of us deserve to be in this church, receiving salvation at the altar...myself least of all. None of us are entitled to grace. But we receive it by grace alone. We don’t deserve it. We don’t earn it. In all things we are beggars, this is true.