

The Goodness of God

I enjoy the way the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible to write and how the text is organized for our benefit and how He reveals the heart of the Father and the compassion and grace of Jesus through the written word. Today, we are going to take a few minutes to explore portions of Matthew 15 and to hear and see what the Holy Spirit has for us. Jesus talked about what really defiles a person, not what enters into the man through the mouth but that which comes out of his mouth is what truly defiles a person. The Scribes and Pharisees that were gathered around that day were angered and offended by what Jesus said, but how many of you know that Jesus was not trying to offend them, He was trying to get them to see the error of their ways. Jesus was sent there by His Father to show them the Truth to help them. But because of their hypocrisy, which was based in their decision to rely on their own instruction and ability and not God's, they were operating in darkness (Jesus said they were blinded). They needed help but chose not to acknowledge their need for help. As a result, they were unable to receive from God because they would not acknowledge their dependence on God.

Later, the narrative shifts to a new location the next place where The Father led Jesus, into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. This account starts with a Canaanite woman approaching Jesus incorrectly, under false pretenses she was making claims to be someone she was not with the desire to get Jesus to do something for her. When she declared "Have mercy on me, O' Lord thou Son of David" she was addressing him based on the rights and privileges of the covenant of Israel which she was not a part of. But yet she obviously had heard about Jesus before and that he was able to help her situation because the Bible says she was loud, troublesome, urgent, and crying, she knew He could help, she knew He was the Messiah, she just didn't know if He would help her. So the bible tells us after she initially cried after Jesus and he didn't answer her. She persisted to cry some more. So much so that the disciples said she is a problem send her away.

If you notice in the narrative, Jesus heard her continual crying and begging but He never sent her away. Instead when the disciples had enough Jesus spoke up. I

believe He spoke up to change the outcome of the woman's condition and to increase His disciples understanding of what He would do – grace always moves to help change things for the better. After Jesus said, “I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”. The woman came kneeling, worshipping Him and kept praying, Lord help me. Then Jesus answered and said “it's not right to take the children's bread and give it to the little dogs (puppies)”. When He said that I believe He was letting her know and everyone there what many in the Nation of Israel believed at that time. Which was that God's “blessings” is for Israel, God's covenant people and all others are not worthy to have this grace from God. That was the understanding and practices of the people of that day.

But I believe Grace was asking a deeper question to the woman – What do you believe? After Jesus spoke, that's when the woman saw it. She realized Jesus the Messiah was speaking to her. The woman must have thought He knows I'm not a Jew, yet He's speaking to me, someone who the Jews don't even deal with. At that moment I believe Grace was there to help her to be truthful about who she was, just like Grace was there for those Scribes and Pharisees earlier. The only difference was they didn't acknowledge and receive the Grace to be truthful and acknowledge their sole dependence on God. But the woman received the Grace to be truthful about who she was and acknowledged her complete dependence on the unmerited favor of God. She acknowledged that I'm not a Jew, I don't deserve this grace based on the covenant you have with Israel, but I need your help, I need grace to extend to me a non-covenant person, I know you are the Messiah, and I know you are good and I place my trust in you. She said, “Yes Lord, yet even the little pups eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table”. Jesus then recognized her faith in who He was and said “O woman great is your faith, be it done for you even as you wish”.

In Mark's gospel the same account is in Chapter 7. We won't turn there, but it says in verse 30, “that when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed”. Praise God isn't God good....God set all that up just for that one woman with no covenant. How much more will He do for His children today?

There's a few lines from a popular song out today that I think sums up the way that woman must have felt as she was on her way back home reflecting on being in Jesus's presence, what He had done for her and when she laid her eyes on her daughter as she calmly laid on the bed.. and I'd like to end with them....

In the winter I believe You

In springtime I see You

It's so good to be with you My hope has come

Lord you make all things new

Your love is my breakthrough

Now I sing hallelujah My hope has come.

I hope this has blessed you