

Matthew 15:21-28  
August 16, 17 & 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
First Lutheran Church of Aikin, MN  
Pastor Melissa Carmack

## **Matthew 15:21-28**

### **Children's Sermon**

Children will be sharing Vacation Bible School Songs during this time. They learned through the week that:

1. Even though you're different...Jesus loves you!
2. Even when you don't understand...Jesus loves you!
3. Even though you do wrong...Jesus loves you!
4. Even when you're afraid...Jesus loves you!

Song: "All Around the World" VBS Theme Song

Song: "Give it away"

## Adult Sermon

You just got a small glimpse of the excitement that happened this past week with VBS. 62 children, 39 volunteers. 101 people learning and teaching about God's love and how it's one of a kind. It was a great week.

And there were so many great moments of the week. Not only was their lots of singing and dancing and learning about weird animals, but there was God. So many God moments where it was clear that God was here! I witnessed one of our 70-year old volunteers getting down to the level of a 4 year old to comfort that child on the first day when everything just seemed so overwhelming. God moment.

I witnessed a teenager who was forced by his parents to help out every night this past week come up to me on the very last night and tell me that I can count him in for next year to help out again! (and his parents weren't even in sight!). God moment.

There were 5<sup>th</sup> graders interacting with 5 year olds, leaders who stepped out of their comfort zones, and 3 year olds retelling the story of the Samaritan woman at the well who was different but Jesus loved her anyway. God moment. God moment. God moment. It was Beautiful! God broke through all barriers this week and made Himself known in so many ways.

I would say it was even a God moment when on the very last day of VBS, I let a little girl who had been begging me all week to wear my weird hat finally wear it! You should have seen her eyes light up when I took it off my head and placed it on hers. She pumped her fists in the air and shouted, "All my begging finally paid off!!!".

Indeed, her begging did finally pay off. And while it's probably not fair to compare this little girl who begged me to wear the hat all week to the woman who we find begging in our Gospel story today to save her daughter...well, it's a good segway anyway. So let's head in that direction.

Jesus has gone out of from the land of Israel into the region of Tyre and Sidon — Gentile territory. He crossed cultural boundaries...He crossed into a territory where He knew that neither him nor his disciples would be very welcome. And so their plan was literally to just pass through. And as they were passing through, a cannonite woman approached them. She came alone without a husband or son or father. And she came shouting loudly, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is tormented by a demon! Help me!" She came begging on behalf of her daughter, and she made a scene and she was persistent!

Jesus' disciples were getting annoyed, or perhaps a bit worried about their safety, and they said to Jesus, "Lord! Tell her to go away! She keeps shouting after us!"

And Jesus did just that. He tried to brush the woman off. He was on a mission to get to the people of Israel, and I might guess that if Jesus stopped to everyone who shouted to him or at him, He knew he might never reach those Israelites in the way God had intended him to. But, this woman had confessed him Lord and Messiah, something many in Israel would not even confess. She asked him for mercy and knelt down before him in a posture of supplication and worship. She had faith that Jesus could heal her daughter of a tormenting demon.

So, What did Jesus do when she would not go away? He called her a dog. Not something I would imagine Jesus to do, and I'm still not sure why he did this. Except I know it wasn't out of the cultural norm to call this woman a dog.

The Jews often called the Gentiles "dogs" and it was not a term of endearment but rather of ridicule or derision. And this is what Jesus does. He turns to the woman and says, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs."

But she turned around and used the same phrase to say to Jesus, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." She had Him there. And Jesus couldn't argue with that statement.

This woman was willing to take even a little bit of what Jesus had to offer. And she was also willing to break cultural barriers to get it. And she had. With this response, had outwitted Jesus and is the only person in the Scriptures to do this. Jesus responds to her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Salvation came to this woman and her possessed daughter not because she became Jewish or promised to keep the Law of Moses or moved to Israel, but because she had faith in Jesus alone.

I think of the ways that I beg...that this church begs...that we all beg. My prayers lately have been just that – Jesus...heal us! Heal our families...heal our nation...Heal the barriers of racism and mental illness...heal our world...and hear our cries!"

Just as this woman begged Jesus to be active and present in her world, we are also beggars for Jesus to be active and present in our world....in our lives today. And there's no shame in a little bit of begging.

"We are beggars; this is true,". These words are reported to be Martin Luther's last words that he ever wrote. "We are beggars; this is true." Christians are "beggars" for God's grace, undeserving but graced nonetheless. A Beggar's faith focuses not on what is given or accomplished or believed, but on what is received: the healing and sustenance desperately longed for and needed.

\*\*When we have struggles within our own family...we are beggars! Lord! Save us...

\*\*When we battle depression, or mental illness or realize what mental illness does to our family and friends...we are beggars! Lord! Save us...

\*\*When diversity and culture and racial profiling continue to affect our country and many other places around the world, we are beggars. Lord, Save us!

After the events of this week that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri, our ELCA presiding bishop put out a statement in response to the hurt and hardship, but I think it speaks to not only this situation, but to Christ's response to our begging:

Bishop Eaton states, "Throughout the gospels, Jesus reached out to the 'others,' those whom society deemed utterly foreign. We are at greatest risk when we divide into "us" and 'them'. Then, we are unable to see each other's humanity," said Eaton. "In Christ, there is no 'them', not Michael Brown not the community, not the police. All are one. All are 'us' and all are Christ's." We pray that peace will come...

At VBS this past week, every night we learned how Jesus' love is one of a kind! It's a simple concept, but there's something to it. One of a kind. Breaks all barriers. One of a kind. Crosses all borders. One of a kind. Extended to all. One of a kind. No "us" and "them". And just like those VBS kids learned this week, even though we are different, even when we might not understand, even though we do wrong, and even when we are afraid, Jesus loves us. Each and every single one of us. Black, white, gay, straight, middle Eastern and American, the mentally ill, and even the Beggars.

Thanks be to God. Amen.