

## Sermon Notes, August 20, 2017 - Welcome Home Sunday

Part of my process for preaching each week is to share with you my “sermon notes.” Sometimes these notes veer towards maps and greek words (I promise not to bore you with conjugations). In other weeks, the social and political context dominates. Every week; however, I am always sleuthing for how to love and know Jesus more deeply.

### So here we go – today is Matthew 15:21-28. The Syrophenician Woman

Did the Gospel reading seem awkward and harsh? I have seen in the past, during this Gospel reading, people physically recoil when they hear Jesus calling this woman a dog. That is a normal response, and I don’t want to talk you out of that. But at least let me offer some context.

#### Geography –



Jesus is not on home turf. The region of the Galilee is his stomping grounds. In Matthew 15 he is on his way to the north in Tyre (pictured) and Sidon. Syro-Phoenicia is an area full of non-Jewish people. The harsh words that Jesus says to the syrophenician woman by calling her a dog, seems arrogant at best. One a much less important way - It would be like me coming to Danville and berating a restaurant because they don’t make BBQ right -which they don’t! I know that Texas is first with Tennessee a close second in BBQ world. But his “arrogance” is a way to tell a bigger story in the Gospel of Matthew.

#### The Syrophenician woman

The Woman in the story is called a “Canaanite” woman. This is an anachronistic term during the first century. Canaanites were the forbearers of the people living in the area, but they would have not called themselves Canaanite, that’s really an Old Testament term. The Canaanite reference is reminding the hearer of the story of the Exodus. The Hebrews went on an exodus from Egypt to the land of Canaan where they entered the promised land. The Gospel wants to remind us that Jesus and the Canaanite woman encapsulate this *big* story and it is not just about a bold woman. Jesus is the promised deliverer of his people and this story points to how this deliverance begins to take shape for all people, not just the chosen Jews.

The “Canaanite” woman is God’s voice –

My opinion - This woman is a prophetic voice of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus just needed a nudge to remember all the sermons he had been preaching! She reminds him what his big mission is – he is the savior of the world. She forces his hand to start now, instead of waiting for some better future point for all people. Jesus protests that he has to take care of Jews first, but she reminds him that there is an abundance of mercy not just for the Jewish people, but also for her and (by extension) all non-Jews. Did you notice? She is not asking for a seat at the table, but she tells Jesus that even scraps of grace can heal, restore, and bless. You know – “Perfect is the enemy of good enough”

#### How much grace is enough?

Are you waiting for perfect grace? Are you waiting for the logistics of your life to be perfect? Hear the Canaanite woman’s reminder – be bold enough, faithful enough to ask God for what you need. Protest to God that you need more - if necessary. **And then** see what how much grace is enough. Don’t wait for the perfect God moment. Don’t be like me - often anxiously waiting for everything to be a well oiled machine before exhaling. There is a better way – “Grace is not the absence of chaos. Grace is the presence of tranquility and joy in the midst of chaos.” Debasish Mridha (I changed the quote from peace to grace.) May we experience the peace of Christ and grace in the storm of the week ahead. Pastor Todd