

Let us pray,

Lord, give us the wisdom to keep pursuing righteousness, no matter what barriers are put in our path.

Amen.

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Lets paint a picture.

The disciples are sitting around a table, talking, eating, enjoying their time.

An outsider approaches them.

But not just an outsider.

She was a part of a group of people that Israel had historically been hostile too.

The Canaanites.

And she is a woman.

Gasp!

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Which in this period, as we all know, was not really a nice sex to be.

Second class citizens women were.

And as she approaches Jesus, “shouting” at him to heal her daughter.

She is met with what seems to me, to be a level of shunning or at the very least, a level of ignoring by Jesus.

And the woman is not deterred by Jesus’ cold shoulder, so much so that the disciples are getting annoyed and want him to essentially shoo her away.

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I don’t know about you, but I don’t like this story.

I don’t like this version of Jesus.

Isn’t Jesus suppose to be welcoming and loving to all people?

And here he is, living into the very thing that we try so hard not to do as Christians, which is to exclude “those” kinds of people.

Jesus is living into the undesirable perceived value of the Canaanite people.

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As he says to her, I am here for Israel, not for you.

Yikes!

Not my Jesus.

Nu uh, this is not who I follow.

And you know what, it gets worse.

Jesus, our Jesus, says to the Canaanite woman:

“It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”

What in the world is happening????

Jesus who we say lives a life of abundance, rather than scarcity, is telling this woman that there is only so much food to go around and it would be wasted on you.

An animal.

Ew.

Again, not my Jesus.

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Matthew could have edited this out to make Jesus look better, but he didn’t.

Why?

Well, I think its important to know what happens next.

Even though, Jesus had all of these feelings towards this poor woman.

Even though he was essentially calling her a lesser being than the children of Israel.

He still decided to heal her daughter because of her faith in him.

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Now the ickiness aside of this whole story, there is a beautiful realization that we can grab from this.

You see, I think the point of the grossness of this story, was partially to grab our attention.

I think Matthew wanted us to be appalled.

Almost wanted us to be disappointed in Jesus.

Our disappointment with Jesus in this moment, shows us that we are starting to understand the message of Christ.

It forces the reader to examine the type of God that we would want.

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It also is a reminder, that as a reader, we like to always put ourselves in the position of the disciples.

But there is no reason why we should do that.

Because the reality is, for the vast majority of us, we are more Canaanite, than we are a part of the children of Israel.

What would it look like and feel like, for us to be called dogs and shooed away, by Jesus.

And told that he did not come for me, for us.

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In Jesus' words of exclusivity, he has forced us to see the grossness of painting lines between people who are in and people who are out.

This language that Jesus uses here, is a lesson to us all, on how horrible and degrading, and inhuman, excluding and diminishing the humanity of certain groups of people is.

Too often we think that we are the in-group.

But we must always remember to put ourselves in the shoes of those in the out-group.

What would life look like, as a poor, excluded, unwanted, ignored human being, who is treated as if they were an animal, look like.

What if that was us?

And worst of all, what if we were the ones treating those humans that way?

What if we were like the disciples, asking our savior to shoo the unwanted, away.

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How many of us ignore people on the margins?

How many of us put people into groups so that it is easier to demonize them and push them aside?

How many of us, wish that Jesus only came for me and those I care about, and ruled for me.

How many of us wish that we could just shoo away a group of people who make us uncomfortable or upset?

But just as important, what if we were the group being shooed away?

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In the uncomfortableness of this story, Jesus provides us with one of the most important lessons that we as people of faith need to understand.

If we are not willing to notice, to invite in, to embrace, to listen too, the people on the margins, the people who are outside of our group.

We will look just as gross if not more, than Jesus did in this moment.

There is nothing righteous about wishing that other people did not exist.

There is nothing righteous about ignoring the needs of other people.

There is nothing righteous about determining who gets saved and who doesn't because of where one was born.

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By faith we are all saved.

By love we are all seen.

By grace, we are all given a second chance to be better.

May we remember that Jesus in the end, did not shoo this poor woman away.

But ended up listening to her, and healing her daughter.

Even though he had every right not to.

Jesus crosses borders that we wish he didn't cross.

But if we are to be his disciples, we must learn to cross those borders with him.

And bring the hope, the love and healing that only our Savior, Jesus Christ can bring.

Cross the borders that the world wants you to maintain.

Not because I told you too, but because that is what our savior demands we do.

Amen.