

Matthew 15:21-28/Mark 7:24-30 –

When God Offends

- 1) Last week, we said that God is never ‘beside Himself’ – that is, He never acts out of character
- 2) Yet there are many places in Scripture where God acts in ways that are surprising to us
 - a) Abraham faced one such moment when God revealed to him the judgment coming to Sodom, saying, ‘Will not the judge of the whole earth do what is right?’
 - b) Moses also appealed to God to change His plans based on His character (Numbers 14:11-19)
 - c) Many times, Jesus says things that, taken by themselves, seem much harsher than the “meek and mild” Jesus we sing hymns about
 - i) ‘Leave the dead to bury their dead’
 - ii) ‘If you do not hate...you are not fit to be a disciple’
 - iii) ‘If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out’
 - d) Today’s lesson is another example
 - i) Didn’t Jesus love and welcome and help everyone?
 - ii) Jesus healed a Roman Centurion’s servant
 - iii) How do we reconcile the love of Jesus with Jesus referring to a foreigner as a ‘puppy’ – a ‘dog’?
 - iv) How do reconcile Jesus ignoring pain and distress in a child and her mother?
- 3) What do we do when God’s apparent actions seem contrary to His character?
 - a) Moses and Abraham ‘wrestled’ with God
 - b) The woman in today’s lesson ‘persisted’
 - i) She did not let offense have the last word
 - ii) She trusted more in what she believed about Jesus than in what circumstances were showing her
 - iii) She loved her daughter more than herself and endured being offended for her daughter’s sake
 - c) In ‘the Parable of the Persistent Widow’, she persisted **in spite of** the character of the unjust judge
- 4) But the question remains: Why would Jesus act this way?
 - a) Nothing Jesus said or did was ‘wrong’ or ‘unjust’
 - b) He *was* sent “to the Jew first”, as He also told His disciples (Matthew 10:5, Romans 1:16, 2:9, 8:25)
 - c) We are told that Jesus “knew what was in a person” (John 2:24-25)
 - d) In the same way, Paul knew that a person “had the faith to be healed” (Acts 14:9) and so healed him
 - e) Both God the Father and Jesus, God the Son, often used the expected reactions of people to teach a lesson (John 6:6)
 - i) Forgiveness would come through the descendant of Abraham, a man known for his faith, so God gave Abraham the opportunity to demonstrate God’s desire to forgive by leading him to plead on Sodom’s behalf (Genesis 18:16-19)
 - ii) God did the same with Moses, and also with Amos (Amos 7:2, 5)
- 5) Though in all these cases it looks like these men made God “change His mind”, we are told plainly that God does not make mistakes or change His mind (Numbers 23:19)
 - a) Rather, God offers these moments as an opportunity
 - i) Genuine faith is exercised and strengthened
 - ii) Empty faith (faith that is ‘void’ – Romans 4:14) is revealed
 - iii) Weakness of faith is also revealed by false beliefs we cling to (Mark 8:18, 1 Corinthians 15:14)
 - b) Jesus gave this woman every opportunity to be offended to prove the genuineness of her faith in Him and her love for her daughter
- 6) Are we willing to allow God to offend us as we seek to draw closer to Him? Our faith is known by how we respond when God offends us
 - a) The Pharisees, when offended, sought to kill Jesus
 - b) Many disciples, when offended, deserted (John 6:61)
 - c) This woman responded with humble persistence