

Matthew 15:21-39

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[0:00] Matthew 15, starting in verse 21, getting down to verse 39, the expanding reach of the king. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you stand with me as we read together the word of God found in Matthew 15, starting in verse 21.

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from the region came out and began to cry out, saying, Have mercy on me, Lord, son of David. My daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.

But he did not answer her a word, and his disciples came and implored him, saying, Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us. But he answered and said, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But she came and began to bow down before him, saying, Lord, help me. And he answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs.

But she said, Yes, Lord. But even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

Then Jesus said to her, O woman, your faith is great. It shall be done for you as you wish.

[1:02] And her daughter was healed at once. Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, he was sitting there. And large crowds came to him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others.

And they laid them down at his feet, and he healed them. So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

And Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.

And the disciples said to him, Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd? And Jesus said to them, How many loaves do you have? And they said, Seven, and a few small fish.

And he directed the people to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fish, and giving thanks, he broke them and started giving them to the disciples. And the disciples gave them to the people. And they all ate and were satisfied.

[2:05] And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. And those who ate were 4,000 men beside women and children. And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your word. Lord, we pray as we have read it and seen it, that your word would speak to our hearts and minds in its clarity. Lord, we pray that we would come to a greater understanding of who you are and all that it is that you desire to do in our lives for your glory and honor.

And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. We see this morning in Matthew 15, verses 21 through 39, the expanding reach of the king.

A couple of things that I want to highlight before we begin to flesh out the text. The first thing that we see here is that we have an individual in which Jesus refers to them as having great faith.

Now, I'll highlight this because I'll have a tendency to move past it without highlighting it later if I don't do so right now. Because this individual who is highlighted as having great faith is one of only two individuals in the entire Gospel of Matthew that is referred to as having great faith.

[3:17] And you must note that both of the individuals in the Gospel of Matthew that are referred to as having great faith are Gentiles. Here is this woman of Syrophenician race who is a Gentile.

The other is the centurion who came to him whose servant was sick. Both of these individuals are referred to as having great faith. And both of these are the only two accounts in the Gospel of Matthew in which a miraculous healing took place from a distance.

And we see this. Now, keeping in mind the setting, right? I know that I always repeat the context and who it is that Matthew is writing to and who his intended audience is. His intended audience is not a Gentile audience.

His intended audience is a Jewish audience. But the two individuals that he reminds his readers of that had great faith were non-Jewish individuals. The Gentile centurion and the Gentile woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Number two, the thing that we must state at the very beginning is we see the difference in the feedings of the multitudes here. Not only is there the difference in count, 5,000 versus 4,000 men, that's not counting women and children.

[4 : 24] The difference in loaves, 5 versus 7. There's also the difference in time because in the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus tells them to sit down on the green grass. By the way, the Word of God is intentional in its wording and it is accurate.

Green grass means that it was springtime. Here in the feeding of the 4,000, he tells them to sit down on the ground. That literally means the hard ground. That's late summer, right, when the cracks begin to form in the ground because it's drying up.

So these took place just in a different time of the year. One in the spring, one in late summer. We also see the difference in the collection of the food afterwards. The first one in the feeding of the 5,000, there were baskets that were full, 12 baskets full.

That word baskets is like a wicker basket that an individual would carry on his arm. Here there are seven large baskets. That word baskets is the baskets which was used to lower Paul down through the wall when he came to Christ.

Remember, he had to flee the city and he was lowered through a window and a wall in a basket. So this basket was big enough to hold an individual. We also have the difference in the multitudes, but we're not getting there yet because that is our points of the message.

[5 : 30] Why this repetition? Why do we need to know that he fed another multitude? And why is it in connection with this account of this woman from this region?

Not only because chronologically they happened at the same time. We see that as we read it in this other account in the Gospel of Mark, but we also see it here and it's pairing together that this is something that happened at a similar time, but it happened for a specific purpose.

And that purpose is to remind us that to reach in the scope of the king is not just the Jewish people. He is the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

He is the king of all men. And he is the Lord of all who come to him. And it is here that we see this, the most Jewish gospel, the one that is written to the Jewish nation, the one that is seeking to remind its Jewish readers that the Messiah they were looking for has prophesied according to the prophet Isaiah, has come and his name is Jesus.

The one whose genealogy goes not through Mary because that wouldn't matter to his Jewish audience if you go and read Matthew chapter 1 again. The genealogy of Christ is traced through David and through his stepfather or the one who was supposed to be his father, Joseph.

[6 : 45] And it is traced through the man because in the Jewish culture it would have mattered. It is Matthew who is writing to this audience that reminds that audience, he's not just your king.

He's the king of all. And we see it in his declaration of the great faith of the Gentiles who come to him. And we see it in particular in this account as we see the expanding reach.

Number one, we see the attraction of the king. It tells us that Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Now if you look at a map that is very far north outside of Jewish territory, kind of towards the coastland, Tyre would actually be on the region of the Mediterranean Sea, so you're kind of going northwest and getting outside of the Galilean region. And he's very moving outside of here. And if you go read Mark chapter 7, you will see that when Jesus withdrew, he went away hoping that no one would notice him. This was the practice of Christ that really serves as a chastisement to me at times.

And it ought to be a rebuke to many of us because Jesus himself understood the value of withdrawing and resting. Quite often Jesus would withdraw. Now is that because he was tired?

[8 : 00] Well, he is fully man, but he's also fully God. Right? God does not get tired. We understand it. The Bible tells us he does not grow weary. He does not get tired. He does not faint.

He does not falter. But yet in his humanity, Christ is putting on display for us the reality that it is good to rest. And he is withdrawing. And he pulls away with his disciples.

We know that in the northern district outside of the Jewish territory, we'll get to this Matthew chapter 18, a Caesarea Philippi. Another one of those instances where they withdrew is this great profession of Peter, where Peter professes who he is.

But here in this particular region, Jesus draws away. He goes for a time of rest. And it tells us in the Gospel of Mark, because the best commentator on Scripture is Scripture, and that's why we need to read these two together, that he went and he went into the house hoping not to be noticed.

Yet he could not escape notice because there was a woman who heard about him. One thing that we have found about Christ is that Christ cannot be present and be unnoticed. Because his presence is always recognizable.

[9 : 10] His presence is always noticeable. Just as much so today as it was in that day. You cannot conceal the presence of the king.

You cannot conceal the presence of the Lord. Here we see that he withdraws for a time of rest, and yet this woman sees him, and she comes to him.

And she comes to him and is attracted to him, and cries out to him because she has a need. We see also that when he leaves here, and I know I'm kind of looking at these two accounts together because I believe they show us one great truth.

Again, going to the Gospel of Mark, that when he leaves this region, Matthew tells us he goes around the Sea of Galilee. That is, he goes south and he begins to go around the Sea of Galilee. Mark tells us that he comes into the region of Decapolis. Decapolis, again, a region outside of Jewish territory, a very Gentile Roman citizen. Decapolis literally means ten cities.

[10 : 12] If you were to look at a map, it would be on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, kind of southeastern from Capernaum. And it is this region that he goes into.

And it is there that, again, people come to him. We find in Matthew that there are multitudes who are sick and lame and mute and deaf, and they have all these problems.

They're being laid at his feet. Mark tells us why they are laid at his feet, because we find that when he comes into Decapolis, he encounters an individual, because some friends bring a man who was mute, and who was deaf and could speak with difficulty, and they bring him to Jesus, and Jesus heals this man.

You remember the account, right, where he spits on the ground, uses saliva, touches the man's tongue, and he says, afefathah, that is, be open. And he tells the man's ears to be open and his mouth to be open, and all of a sudden what was binding him was loose.

And he begins to speak with clarity, and he can hear. And just as Jesus often does, he tells the people not to say anything, and the man continuously goes around and begins to profess what Christ has done, because when Jesus has done something in your life, it's hard to be quiet about it.

[11 : 14] Right? So he began to go all throughout the region of Decapolis, and then we go back to Matthew, and we find out because of this man's testimony, he found out who Jesus was through what Jesus did in his life. Because of this man's testimony, now multitudes of people are being laid at the feet of Christ.

See, there is this attractive quality of the king. And none of these, by the way, take place in Jewish territory.

Because the reality is this, all who come to him are welcome. We see this.

Mark says he was hoping not to be noticed, but he did not disguise himself and cast himself away from this lady. He went into the region of Decapolis, and he ministered to one individual whose testimony spread throughout the region, and all of a sudden multitudes would come to him.

Now, he is fully God and fully man. He can do whatever he wants to. As a matter of fact, Scripture tells us there were times where they sought to stone him, and he would pass through their midst, and they couldn't do anything because his time had not yet come.

[12 : 21] One of the most astounding statements, and I know it sounds kind of just, in its everyday reading, it sounds kind of normal, but it's so astounding that they're trying to kill him, and he passes through their midst, and they couldn't do anything to him because his time had not yet come, which means you couldn't kill Jesus until it was time to kill him, right?

You couldn't touch him until he allowed you to touch him, until he said, okay, now you can take me. So he has the power to do whatever it is he wants to do, and yet when the multitudes come as a result of that one individual's testimony, he doesn't cast them away.

He heals them. Right there. There's this attraction of the king. Now, I want you to notice, Warren Wiersbe points it out in such a great way, and it's worth noting that when the woman comes to him, who is of Gentile descent, she is of Syrophenician race, it tells us she's from that region.

It tells us that in the Gospel of Mark. Then when she comes to him, now it's important to understand who she is, right? We're not judging her for that. We're just understanding the proper context of this. And I want us to kind of clarify a little bit of what's going on.

She comes to him, and she's crying out, and she says, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Matthew tells us what? Jesus said nothing. Said nothing. So, man, he gave her the cold shoulder.

[13:39] No, she came to him the wrong way. See, Son of David is a Jewish term. So she, being a Gentile, came to Christ, trying to claim the benefit of a Jewish individual upon this son of David.

And she has no right there, because she is not of the covenant people of the nation of Israel. She has no claim upon the son of David. He said, wait a minute.

I don't understand. We'll keep reading. His disciples, I tend to think it's probably Peter leading the charge, because he is the outspoken one, but maybe it wasn't.

His disciples say, Lord, just send her away. She keeps crying out after us, right? She keeps saying, now, we don't know if they're saying, take care of it and send her away, or just, you know, tell her to go away. We don't know. But they're like, Lord, okay, it's time just to get her out of here.

And yet he doesn't say anything to her. It's only when she cries out like this, she says, Lord, help me. Then he speaks to her.

[14:48] Notice the difference. Son of David is coming to him on a Jewish messianic expectation term, of which she has no right. Lord, help me is coming as an outcast sinner and desperate need of help, to which he will respond.

Friend, listen to me. As far as I know, none of us in here are of Jewish descent. We have no claim upon him as the son of David, but we have every right to come to him as a hopeless beggar in desperate need of his response.

And we say, Lord, help me. And then he said, we see this throughout scripture.

We can't stand on the heritage and the faith of another. We have to come and are on humility and acknowledgement of who we are, who we are, in light of who he is.

There is the attraction of the king. The second thing that we notice here is the ability of the king.

Because his abilities are not limited to the nation of Israel or to the Jewish people.

[16:13] He's not just the king local. He's the king global. As a matter of fact, the globe is his footstool, the Bible tells us. The world is under his feet.

He is the king eternal. He is the king of all. And the ability that he possesses is not just an ability to meet the needs of a particular people. It is to meet the needs of all people.

She cries out to him. I know there's this statement we have to address. I spoke with a couple of brothers already this morning and told them we would have to address this. Because when she says, Lord, help me, it says, then he spoke to her and he says, I have come only to the nation of Israel.

And he says, what right do the dogs have to eat from the children's bread? And all of a sudden we're like, wow, he just called her a dog. Right? It seems to read that way.

One thing we need to understand, let's take it in context, right? Because Jesus is reminding her of not only who she is and what rights she has to him and things of that nature. It's also put in its cultural setting.

[17:14] Jewish individuals would refer to non-Jewish people as dogs. Now stay with me until I finish this, okay? Because I know all of a sudden, welling up inside of you, you're getting a little bit angry.

But just stay with me. In particular, Jewish rabbis would refer to non-Jewish or Gentile people as dogs. They were unclean. And now when they used the word dogs, they were always speaking in reference to those scoundry dogs that would run around that were unclean, eating, that were unwelcome in the cities, and dogs weren't looked at as pets, right?

You didn't go home. Like when I go home this afternoon, I'm going to have two dogs run up and meet me. Well, more than likely, they'll just sit where they're at because it's midday and they have no energy. In the middle of the day, they run all night and bark all night.

So they're just going to lay there and want me to come scratch them on the head. And I will probably do it as I walk by them because, you know, they're my pets. And that's okay. But dogs

weren't seen that way in Jewish culture. They were unclean, unwelcome, unwanted animals. And they roamed about the streets and they just ate dead carcasses and they didn't like anything of them. So rabbis would usually refer to Gentile people as dogs. Jesus doesn't use that word. He said, well, it says dogs in our English language, right?

[18 : 23] Because the dogs which Jesus uses here is the word for a small household pet. He says, you know, you're not of the nation of Israel, so you're not around the table.

Because the Gentile mission hasn't started yet. Where does it start? You're right. It's Acts chapter 10 when Peter goes to the household of Cornelius. You're exactly right. And then there's the missionary to the Gentile people who is Paul and Barnabas.

And then later on, Silas and Timothy get involved in that. You're exactly right. Hasn't started yet because that's a post-resurrection event, not a pre-resurrection event, right? There's a light unto the Gentiles that flows from the Jewish people.

There's an order. God is a God of order. So Jesus is reminding her. He's not degrading her. He is just reminding her of who she is in society.

Again, this gels with the rest of Matthew in that Jesus often would touch the untouchable or the unclean. A woman of any would be unclean, but a woman of Gentile race is particularly unclean.

[19 : 28] And yet we find him here meeting with her in a house, speaking to her. And she says, well, you're right, Lord. She admits it. She acknowledges, I'm not of the household of Israel.

I'm not around the table. But even the dogs eat from the crumbs that fall from the children's plates. And to this, Jesus responds, you've got great faith. You've got great faith.

He says, and let it be done to you as you have desired. And immediately, the Bible says, her daughter was healed. Mark tells us that she went home and her daughter was laying in bed, completely healed, the demon gone.

Only the second occurrence, the only two events that we find in the Gospel of Matthew in which a long distance healing took place. Both of them as a result of a non-Jewish individual's request. His ability is not limited. We see the repetition of that in the feeding of the 4,000 because we know that Jesus can feed the multitudes.

[20 : 30] We've seen him do it just a chapter back in Matthew 14. We have seen it take place in Jewish territory. Here we see it taking place in Decapolis. By the way, we know this multitude is non-Jewish, that they are Gentile because of this one statement.

As a result of these healings, they glorified, what does it tell us in verse 31? Did you notice that? They glorified the God of Israel. Because if they were of Jewish descent, they would just glorify the Lord their God.

But these are non-Jewish individuals, therefore they're glorifying the God of Israel, which is to be differentiated from the God in which they were accustomed to. In the feeding of the 5,000, there was a great crowd with him.

In the feeding of the 4,000, this crowd had been with him three days. The feeding of the 5,000 had just taken place for one day. So while they came to him, probably having packed a little bit of food, their food was long gone by now.

So for three days they have hung out and lingered and stayed around this Lord Jesus, who is reminding them to glorify the God of Israel, not the God that they're used to. And we see his ability again to meet a pressing need.

[21 : 41] And it is just like the feeding of the 5,000. They bring the food to him. He blesses the food. He gives it to the disciples. The disciples give it to the people, and then they pick up the leftovers.

Remember, we were reading that account. We spoke how Jesus takes what we have, and he gives it back to us for the needs of others. Why this repetition? Why this repetition?

The reason the repetition, the reason we are shown that it takes place exactly the same way in the feeding of the 5,000, and I believe is the same reason why when we open up the book of Acts and we see the moving of the Spirit, every time an individual is filled with the Spirit, the same thing happens.

When the disciples were gathered in the upper room, 120, they were filled with the Spirit. Tongues of fire fell upon them. They began to testify and to glorify. They began to proclaim the greatness of Christ.

When Peter goes to the household of Cornelius and the Holy Spirit falls upon them, they begin to testify and glorify and profess the greatness of Christ. When he goes into different regions and individuals are filled with the Holy Spirit, they begin to testify and to glorify and proclaim the greatness of Christ.

[22 : 53] Every time the gospel goes into a new region, the individuals are filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit enables them to speak in tongues and enable to proclaim the greatness.

It's the same thing over and over and over and over again in the book of Acts. And what it's doing is it's validating what took place in Jerusalem is the same thing that took place in the household of Cornelius, which is the same thing that took place in Antioch, which is the same thing that takes place in other regions, which means the gospel of Jerusalem is also the gospel of the world.

And the reason we see this repetition of the feeding of the multitudes is because the king who can provide the need to the Jewish individuals is also the king who provides the need for the world. He is able, not just to meet the needs of a particular people, he is able to meet the needs of all people. We see his ability. The thing that causes us to praise and to glorify him is the third and final thing.

Not that people are attracted to him, not that he is able. The third thing is, is that the king accepts them. It is the acceptance by the king.

[24 : 08] He accepted those who came to him. We see it throughout the text. He wasn't trying to discourage the woman. He didn't even remove her from his presence.

As a matter of fact, that which he said was for the purpose of building her faith, not diminishing her faith. He accepted her, which was not only very uncultural, but highly unlikely.

When they brought the sick and the lame and the outcasts and the hurting and the deaf and the mute and all those that were disease ridden and they laid them at his feet, Matthew tells us he healed them.

He accepted them. He would touch them. He touched the one. It is the one who goes and testifies to everyone else. It tells us in the Gospel of Mark that the first one who came to him in the Decapolis region, Jesus touched him, laid his hands upon him.

He accepted him. We see his acceptance and the reality that what he has done for others, he does for them. And this reaffirms the faith.

[25 : 21] And we're almost done. Hear me out. This reaffirms not only the faith of the individual, but the hope of the Gospel. That all of those who come to him are accepted by him.

Now they are drawn. We understand the remainder of Scripture, right? That none come lest they be drawn. But the whosoever will is not limited in scope to a particular group, to a particular nationality, to a particular race, to a particular socioeconomic status.

There's no limitation to the whosoever will. But all that the Father draws to him are accepted by him, in which Jesus says, And none have I lost.

Because the reality is, is that he is King of kings and Lord of lords. Not just of the Jewish people. But of all people.

And those who come to him in faith are welcomed into his presence. And he meets the needs of those individuals, just as he meets the needs of all individuals. The reality is, is that the expanding reach of the king is not limited in scope, power, or ability.

[26 : 43] But rather has its application to all people for his glory and honor. This is why when we get to the book of Revelations, we will see that every tribe, every tongue, every nation, falling down before his throne.

Because he is King of kings and Lord of lords. He's not just the King of Israel. That's one title. That's not all the title.

Just yesterday. Yesterday afternoon. It was a great tragedy at our house. We about ran out of coffee creamer. So, it was going to be a very bad morning for you guys if I didn't have coffee creamer.

I mean, I would have drank my coffee black. It didn't matter. I could have drank it that way. My wife, not so much. I was going to have some caffeine in me. So, I had to stop down here at Dollar General and get some coffee creamer. Thankful we got that little store.

As I was walking in, so not looking like a pastor, which is often the case because we've been mowing the yard and things like that. And I walk by his car and I hear, hey, Mr. Billy Joe. We talk about this all the time, right?

[27 : 44] Depending on what you call me is how you know me. I know before I even turn around that if I hear Mr. Billy Joe, it's a kid from my bus. Because those are the only people who call me Mr. Billy Joe.

Because the title matters. The title matters. And I knew exactly how they knew me. Therefore, I knew how I could respond to them.

If I had heard, hey, Brother Billy Joe, I'd have tried to hide a little bit more because, you know, I didn't look like a pastor. I just got off the weed eater and I was very nasty and dirty and would have walked a little quicker.

No, I wouldn't have. I wouldn't have done that to you guys. But how you know me matters on what you call me. Listen, friend. Jesus is the king of Israel.

But his kingdom goes far, far greater than that. He's the Lord of my life. He's the Lord of lords.

[28 : 44] He's the king who dictates what I do. He's the king of kings, Lord of lords. And he's over all.

And one day, every tongue will confess and recognize that. How much greater now to be able to declare that and therefore have a right to stop him.

In his tracks, much like right there. And I turned and noticed and I said hi. Because we know who he is. And we call upon him.

And the beauty of these accounts show us he was drawing away for a time of rest, but he always had time. He always met the need. And he was always available.

And he still is today. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much. Thank you for this day. Thank you for your faithfulness. We thank you for who you are.

[29 : 46] Lord Jesus, we give you your rightful position. You are king of kings and Lord of lords.

Not just of a particular people, but of all people. Lord, may we fall down and worship you as so.

May our lives be given for your service, your glory, and your honor. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 38] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.