

SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR AUGUST 22, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Matthew 15:21-28
NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to *the district of Tyre and Sidon*. ²² Just then a *Canaanite woman* from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to THE DOGS." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even THE DOGS eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Why does Jesus decline to help the woman and then change his mind?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you – or us as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Matthew tells the story of Jesus as a cosmic epic. It doesn't begin with Jesus. God has been at work for a long time. Salvation, the main business of Jesus, is the coming together in formal form of themes and energies and movements that had been set in motion before the foundation of the world. Matthew provides the comprehensive context by which we see all God's creation and salvation completed in Jesus, and all parts of our lives – work, family, friends, memories, dreams – also completed (*or fulfilled*) in Jesus. (from *The Message*)

the district of Tyre and Sidon:: This is to the north of Israel, in present day Lebanon. So it's outside of the Jewish area, in a foreign or "gentile" region.

Canaanite woman:: While never given a name, this anonymous woman is identified by her race and gender. To the authors of the Bible, Canaan is the land which the tribes of Israel conquered after an Exodus from Egypt and the Canaanites are the people they disposed from this land.

shouting:: The word used here *krázō* means to "cry out loudly with an urgent scream or shriek", using "inarticulate shouts that express deep emotion." It's more than just being loud, it's visceral emotion.

knelt before him:: The word used here, *proskuneō* means to "kiss the ground when prostrating before a superior; to "worship", or to "do obeisance." Does her act of faith change Jesus' opinion? She assumes a position of supplication and respect, to beseech Jesus to change his priorities, to help her, a Gentile, although he's just said that his priority is to help Jews. Why?

THE DOGS:: Jews in Jesus' day sometimes referred to Gentiles as "dogs" (in Greek, this word is *KUON*) Non-Jews were considered so unspiritual that even being in their presence could make a person ceremonially unclean (John 18:28). Much of Jesus' ministry, however, involved turning expectations and prejudices on their heads (Matthew 11:19; John 4:9–10). But here Jesus uses the word *KUNARION*, meaning "small dog" or "pet dog." This is a completely different word from the term *KUON*, used to refer to unspiritual people or to an "unclean" animal. So, according to both the context and language involved, Jesus wasn't referring to the Canaanite woman as a "dog," either directly or indirectly. He wasn't using an epithet or racial slur but making a point about the priorities He'd been given by God.