

Coop's Scoops # 86, Sunday Liturgy and Sermon, August 16th 2020

“ Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom and healed every infirmity among the people” (Matt: 4:23)



Our Readings:

Genesis 45: 1-15 Psalm 133 Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32

The Collect: Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and sent into our hearts the Spirit of your Son. Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that all people may know the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, now and for ever.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 15: 21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just 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.” ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

The Sermon: “Saturday Night Live in the Desert” In the Scriptures we sometimes learn things that are quite amazing, yet also quite comprehensible. The story of Joseph reuniting with his brothers is like that. His compassion, his wisdom, and his mercy is amazing! He could have kept his brothers, those who had attempted to kill him, and then sold him into slavery..kept them right under his thumb for the rest of their lives, groveling for scraps of food. But he loved them. And he wanted his father and his little brother with them. So he chose, wisely, to focus on the good which God had brought out of their evil deeds, and to forgive them, with

many tears and many hugs. Such love may be beyond our own experience, but it is nonetheless understandable.

When we consider the Jesus interaction with the Caananite women however, we move from amazed to mystified. “Who is this?”, we ask ourselves, “Can this be Jesus making this poor woman grovel like a dog because she loves her sick daughter?” It sounds awful. It sounds elitist. It sounds quite racist. How do we deal with a Scripture like this?

Whenever we are confronted by a new problem, something we don't understand, our first resource is to look at what we do know. We start there. We know that Jesus was the most inclusive Man. We know because of what He did in Samaria, talking to a woman – taboo gender; of Samaria – taboo race; a gentile-taboo faith; alone –taboo culture. Jesus did not act according to the social rules and prejudices of his day. We know also that Jesus was the most loving Man. We know because of His deeds, acts of healing, acts of caring for people that kept Him up all day and all night, acts of teaching which transformed the lives of those who heard Him, and we know because of His promises. He is the One who said “If anyone comes to Me, I will in no case whatsoever cast them out”. He is the One who said “I come that you may have life and have it abundantly”. He is the One who told us that God loved the world so much He gave His only Son that whoever believes should not perish but have eternal life. Given these things that we know already – Jesus is all justice and all love – then how could this event be interpreted? Well, one interpretation I like, I call “Saturday Night Live in the Desert”: A comedic social commentary, willingly undertaken to teach a hard lesson through humour.

See if this works for you. The disciples are upset. They've probably got a headache because a woman has been yelling at them for help and won't stop. Notice they don't help her. They don't do anything except complain to Jesus to send her away. Picture Jesus kind of rolling His eyes toward the disciples, winking at the woman, and grinning broadly saying "Don't you know that I'm only here to help the children of Israel? Don't you know it's not fair to give the children's food to dogs like you people". And the woman, getting the drift, smiling right back and saying "Ah, but even the dogs get the crumbs from the children's table". Then, a mighty laugh, and a "Aha, your faith is great. And your daughter is well". The disciples got a perfect lesson in inclusive love and justice mixed with mercy. And they got it in a way they would never forget. Their sad lack of understanding, not the woman's plight, was the butt of the joke.

Perhaps that interpretation works for you. It does for me. But there are others. Again, we go back to what we know. Comparing Scripture to Scripture. Jesus spoke elsewhere, in Luke, of a woman who badgered a judge so badly that he finally gave her what she wanted just to get rid of her. That woman could be a member of the "Uppity Women" club. Or perhaps, more reasonably, the "Valiant Women" club. There used to be a bumper sticker that said "Uppity Women of the World Unite". Wouldn't that be formidable! Downright scary, maybe. This Caananite woman seems to have badgered Jesus with reasoned argument until He could no longer refuse her desire that her daughter be healed. Perhaps Jesus interacted with her in such a way as to goad her to be bold. Perhaps His message was that we too should be bold in our own petitions. That we too, when our need is great, should come with courage and boldness, trusting that He will respond even when it seems our request is too great. The writer to the Hebrews may have

had this very woman in mind when he penned the wonderful words “ Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). We are bold, not because we deserve mercy and help. We are bold because we believe that our Lord is merciful and will help, regardless of any merit on our part.

So we have now thought of two interpretations of a puzzling and on the surface distasteful interaction: “Saturday Night Live in the Desert”, and “Uppity Women of the World Unite!” Both can teach us much about our relationship with God , with one another, and perhaps especially with those who are “outside” of our regular experience and culture. There are undoubtedly other interpretations. The comparison principal, however, remains. If we look at the puzzlements of Scripture in isolation from the whole story of Scripture, we may well stumble. We need to increase our knowledge, and open our hearts to surprises in order to grow and to stand firm in our faith.

“Study to present yourself approved unto God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”. 2 Timothy 2:15. This is part of what it means to love God with all of our mind. And enables us to honour God with all of our lives, and hearts, and souls.

May God be with us in our journey of understanding. Amen.

Prayer: Please repeat the Lord’s Prayer, remembering that “Our Father” means “Father of All or us” and that “ All who Love God must love All Whom God Loves”.

And from my dock, where I hope I am relaxing this weekend, I offer you my blessing and my love.....”May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of

God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us forevermore and evermore, and the blessing of Almighty God be upon you always! -Judie+

Scoops are back this coming week!