

JESUS OF NAZARETH
GREAT FAITH
MATTHEW 15:1-28
7-12-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Reflect

Martin Luther: On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me.

Welcome

Good Morning! What a joy and privilege it is to worship our triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – whether at home or at the sanctuary. Take a moment to remember your church community, maybe someone or some family you have not seen in while. Thank God for them and pray for them as we all continue to persevere through these challenging times.

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance!

Our “Call to Worship” is from Psalm 4. As we mentioned last week, we will incorporate more Psalms that capture the real struggle of faith that we all battle. These Psalms will bring to light our angst, hurt, sorrow and grief. But they will also direct us to our source of comfort, hope, faith and security. Wherever you are at this morning, whether doing well or struggling, Jesus of Nazareth meets us there. He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us, giving us his Spirit to empower and equip us to be his disciples today. Take your eyes off the things of this world. Turn your eyes to Jesus. Love him. Trust him. Hope in him. And, cry out to him!

Call to Worship: Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, “Who will show us some good?”

Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!” You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord,

Candle Lighting – Light the candle as a reminder that God is Light (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)!

King David is the Psalmist above. He asks God to “lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!” When we are face to face with God, his light shines upon us so that we might be able to see and not stumble in the dark. Note the next line from King David, “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain (beer and/or wealth) and wine abound!” May the light of the love of God shine



brightly on us and may be experience the joy in Christ that transcends any earthly pleasures.

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine your light!

Vision Cast / Prayer

We will not be singing this morning nor next week. While this may be leveraged as a source for angst and division, we ask that you make the most of this opportunity to reflect on your worship through music

Responsive Reading - The Immeasurable Greatness of Jesus of Nazareth

Ephesians 1:18b-21 – May we know what is the hope to which he has called us, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Ephesians 1:22 -- And God put all things under Jesus' feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

Colossians 1:15-18 – Jesus of Nazareth is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Colossians 1:19-20 -- For in Jesus of Nazareth all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Philippians 2:8-11 -- And being found in human form, Jesus of Nazareth humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Revelation 19:1 -- Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!

Revelation 5:11-12 -- Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying:

Revelation 5:12-13 -- Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! Amen!!

Centering Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, either out loud or silent. You can use this acronym as a guide if you like:

A – adoration – praise God for who he is



- C – confession – acknowledge your sins to God who is merciful and forgives/forgave us in Christ
- T – thanksgiving – give thanks to God for what he has done, is doing and will do
- S – supplication – ask God to meet you where you are at with your thoughts and feelings about yourself, God, others and this world

Offering

Disciples of Jesus image him by being cheerfully generous with their resources. This doesn't always happen easily. Our sinful nature likes to hoard and splurge on self. Remind yourself of why we give cheerfully and generously:

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration

We celebrate this new generation, the young men and women of today. May God shine his truth into their hearts. May they hear you in music, see you in art and experience you through the love and care of family, friends and teachers. Build your gospel hope into their lives. May they sense this hope rise in their hearts as they encounter the power of nature, the majesty of the oceans and the beauty in creation.

Sow your wisdom into their minds. May they discover godly wisdom as they read their bibles, discuss deeper issues of life or encounter hardships or difficulties. Come weave your love into their dreams and ambitions. May they find Christ-centered joy in their giftedness and opportunities for their talents and aspirations for kingdom causes. May this new generation of your young men and women know and love and trust you, the only true God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 15:1-28

Fair warning. This is a challenging passage. It addresses “traditions” which we may over identify with and sheds Jesus of Nazareth in a light that might make us uncomfortable, especially in today's hypersensitive culture regarding race and how we talk about and understand one another. However, in the end, we witness gospel grace given by Jesus of Nazareth. Specifically, we will see the supremacy of the word of God, the centrality of the heart and the necessity of faith for all people. The angle we will take is bent on the Reformation and the principle of *semper reformanda* – always reforming. We will see that to grow in faith, we must be open to the other; we must take low status and be receptive to hear and learn and change and grow as we encounter the other.

There are three stories Matthew wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we will hear today. And ironically, the first two is about washing your hands!! The Pharisees come all the way from Jerusalem to try and find fault with Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, Jesus turns the table of them and exposes their lostness. Then, we find a remarkable story about a Canaanite woman (the archetype “other”) who Jesus interacts with in a way that is not typical of Jesus. What we will see in these three stories are fundamental truths about being a disciple of Jesus Christ and a challenge to live in a way that is in line with these truths today.

Gospel Message: Great Faith

We are beggars. This is true. Martin Luther, after settling a dispute between brothers and then



preaching on a Sunday morning, fell ill to the point where he wrote up his last will and testament. In it, he strongly wanted his death to be public, that is, surrounded by his family and friends and others to witness his steadfast confidence in Jesus and his salvation grounded in him. The Catholic Church had said that heretics would die a horrible death. Luther was adamant to show otherwise. His Last Will and Testament began with the words, "I am well known in heaven, on earth and in hell." And his last words were, "We are beggars. It is true." Yes! We are beggars. This is true! Martin Luther understood a central principle of faithful discipleship to Jesus of Nazareth – a position of poverty and need that he grounded in the truths of scripture, expounded from the doctrines of grace and lived out through the obedience of faith.

"Little faith" Peter has just walked on water and Jesus has just healed a lot of people in the area, demonstrating once again his character and competence as Lord and Savior. It is at this time a group of merciless, legalistic and lost Pharisees travel north from Jerusalem to indict Jesus as a false by accusing him of breaking a long-standing tradition of ceremonially washing one's hands to make oneself not just physically clean, but spiritually clean too. The disciples are breaking this tradition presumably because Jesus is not washing his hands before eating. (I know, the irony of this text at this time!) However, Jesus traps them in their own game by turning the accusing finger around at them and exposing their hypocrisy. They had created a loophole that made it possible for adult children to break the 5th commandment of honoring your father and mother. It was believed and taught for generations that one major way to honor your father and mother was to take care of them financially when they were no longer able to work (they had no IRA's and 401K's at that time). However, the Pharisees created a law that made it okay to not financially honor their parents if they gave their money to God (which was really to them.) This was a tradition and not a command of God. Jesus calls them out and says this is breaking and making void the word of God (the 5th commandment). So, they were making a worse error. **If Jesus and the disciples were breaking tradition, they were breaking God's word.**

Jesus reveals to them their error. They are elevating tradition over scripture, over the word of God. In the Reformation, this is called sola scriptura which is Latin for "only scripture." Martin Luther and John Calvin amongst others had realized that the Roman Catholic Church, that they were members of, was doing this very thing by elevating the status of tradition and the words of the Pope to Biblical status. That is, human words and ways were equal to God's words and ways. In this way, the supremacy of scripture as the authoritative rule was pushed aside to accommodate human tradition and ways. The Reformers sought to reground the Christian life on the Bible and not man-made traditions and ways. They did not think traditions and man-made ways were unimportant, they were. However, they were always subservient to the Bible and when there was contradiction, the Bible would always have final say.

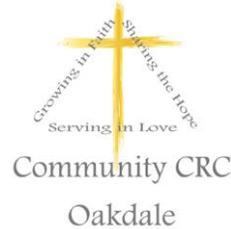
Sola scriptura rests on three very important principles: (1) Inspiration, (2) Inerrancy and (3) Sufficiency. First, they rightly recognized that ALL of scripture was inspired by God not just portions of it (which portions and who would decide?). This is from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 which says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." The entire Bible is inspired by God the Holy Spirit who used people to write his Word. Because God cannot lie and is always truthful, it cannot be in error and therefore is inerrant. Therefore, at the crux of the matter was the question, "Who does or does not err?" People outside the biblical writers err – traditions, the Pope and the way



of humans err but not God's Word. Third, based on the first two, the Reformers recognized the sufficiency of scripture for providing all we need for our salvation and how to live faithfully as a disciple of Jesus today. They believed because of these three principals that the Bible was largely clear and accessible to all people to read themselves in conjunction with the Church. They wanted biblically literate people who did not depend solely on the teaching of the religious leaders but could be like the Bereans who checked what Paul was saying to make sure it was in line with scripture.

Today, we are in need of another reformation. In fact, we are always supposed to be reforming as people and doctrines tend to drift and creep and shift over time and under the influence of different cultures and peoples. The pendulum of lostness reveals this today. We are in a biblically illiterate society. Well over two thirds of Christians believe that the phrase, "God helps those who help themselves" is from the Bible. One quarter of Christian teenagers have no idea what Easter is about let alone key themes of salvation, redemption, justification, sanctification, incarnation, resurrection, ascension, judgment, heaven and hell to name just a few. As such, it is the scholars who hold the reign of biblical truth and in the hand of legalists, erroneously add works back into salvation. If our approach to scripture is under the influence of licentious younger brother tendencies, we will continue to ignore or reinterpret scripture to fit our wants and desires instead of the other way around. Think about the various views of people who claim to be within the kingdom of heaven regarding sexuality, gender, marriage, and more. Sola scriptura and the principle of inspiration, inerrancy and sufficiency redirects us back to the authoritative role of scripture in a disciple's life. What has your posture to the Bible been lately? What kinds of conversations have you had with others about the Bible? How have you been able to reincorporate the truths, stories and principles of the scriptures (particularly the gospel) with others? **We are beggars. It is true. We must come to scripture as ones who are subservient to it to receive and the learn and to submit.**

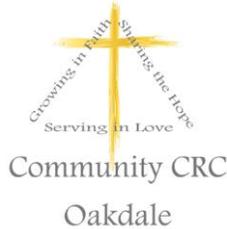
Jesus goes on to say that the disciple's breaking tradition by not washing hands or obeying the dietary laws is not problematic at all. He reasons that it is not what goes in a person that defiles them but what comes out of their mouths that defiles them. Why? Because what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart. The essence of being a disciple of Jesus is the transformation of the heart that was once hardened and dead but now is softened and alive in Jesus Christ. Jesus was told that he offended the Pharisees by this. He instructs his disciples to leave them alone; that they are blind guides leading blind followers whose path will lead to falling into a pit; that they are not planted by God the Father and will be uprooted (and apparently tossed out and burned if consistent with previous parables). Jesus is getting at a second Reformational principle: sola gratia or "only grace." This is the method of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. With the Reformers, they never questioned the Catholics understood the necessity of grace but their understanding of the sufficiency of God's saving grace. The Catholics believed it was necessary but insufficient and needed to be supplemented with works. The Reformers believed it was completely sufficient and that works would result from being saved, not as a co-cause of it. The Catholics believed the heart wasn't completely corrupt and could co-operate to a degree with grace. However, the Reformers, because of sola scriptura believed passages like **Jeremiah 17:9** which says that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" and **Ephesians 2:1** "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins." and **Romans 3:10-12** "as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'" Only grace alone saves us; brings the dead to life and transforms a person from condemnation to salvation in Jesus Christ and



through the Holy Spirit.

Today we are in need of another reformation. The dominant religious culture in America believes that if one is good, God will reward them with heaven. Scripture makes it clear this is not true. The Reformers went out of their way to expose this false teaching within the Catholic Church, their Church. Legalistic and lost elder brothers will add things to grace in order to be saved; grace plus works; grace plus going to church, grace plus giving; grace plus serving etc. The Reformers brought us back to grace plus nothing. We are saved by God's grace, there is nothing we can boast about. He gets all the glory. They don't need only Jesus as Savior, just a necessity to be added to their own self-righteousness (so they think). Licentious younger brothers will cheapen grace, leveraging it as a means to do whatever they want in life since God's grace is sufficient to forgive. They will rest on a prayer they prayed once and largely go about their life as before. There is no transformation. They are still in control of their life just like the legalistic elder brothers. They have no need for Jesus as Lord. Neither believe they are beggars in desperate need of God's amazing grace and love and mercy; that we have nothing to offer towards our salvation. **We are beggars. It is true. We need the all sufficient grace of God to save us. Yes, we are saved by grace but it is through faith.** That is our response -the good works of faith.

In the next raw scene, Jesus leaves the Galilean area and goes into Gentile territory (non-Jewish). He heads Northwest to the area of Tyre and Sidon which are on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. There he encounters a "Canaanite" woman. This is highly unusual language for Mathew to use to describe this lady. There were no people called "Canaanites" at that time. They were a people that had been largely destroyed and dispossessed by Israel when they conquered the Promised Land. Its use would be that of a negative reference to the past enemies of God. This is the only place in the NT that uses this word and it is on the lips of Jesus. The woman is a mom who is desperate to save her daughter from the torments of a demon. She somehow knows about Jesus, his character and his competence that forms her in such a way as to approach someone in that culture who was unapproachable – a Jewish male. She utilizes a Jewish title for Jesus that recognizes him as the Messiah, "Son of David." She cries out for mercy. Jesus ignores her. What? We don't know why. She cries out to the disciples and starts getting on their nerves so they ask Jesus to get rid of her (presumably by doing what she wants and being done with her). He responds that he is only sent to the "house of Israel" implying that she is not currently part of the plan. She is ignored a second time. What? It seems that Jesus is obeying the "salvation historical privilege" of the Jews. That this is the case is affirmed by her not contesting Jesus' responses but submitting to Jesus' authority. Yet, she doesn't give up and responds a third time imploring as she knelt before him, "Lord, help me!" Jesus responds by telling her it is not right to take the children's (Jews) bread and throw it to the "dogs" (her). Jesus implicitly calls her a dog. What? We don't know why. However, she responds in a way that amazes Jesus of Nazareth which is the main focus of the story. What's amazing is that she agrees with him and then extrapolates that even the dogs get the crumbs from the table. Jesus is amazed exclaiming what "great" (mega) faith she has (remember Peter here) and immediately heals her daughter from a distance. We are beggars. It is true! The Canaanite women knew who she was and what her place in God's unfolding drama was and from that posture of faith she amazes Jesus. That's what we are called to do. Amaze Jesus with our humble, low status approach to his authority and leadership. The disciples can learn from her, and so can we. She gave the disciple another glimpse at the cosmic scope of the gospel going to all peoples of all nations. She, for a moment, provided an opportunity for Jesus to "reverse historical tradition" and create an exceptional anticipation of what was to come.



The Reformers battled a third wayward understanding and practice of the Catholic Church that made faith a work that helps save us. The Reformers emphasized that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, *sola fidei*. This Canaanite woman exhibited great faith. She somehow had access to the scriptural stories of the Messiah and understood by faith that Jesus was this person. She understands that it is only by Jesus' gracious act that her daughter can be healed (remember healed was the same word we get "salvation" from). Her biblically accurate faith formed her to assume the posture of a beggar that must submit in humble reverence (notice her titles of honor and her kneeling before him and her pleas for help) to Jesus of Nazareth as Savior and Lord. Martin Luther understood the same thing in Jesus of Nazareth and was "all in" with Jesus by being "all in" with the supremacy of scripture over tradition and being "all in" with the all sufficient salvation power of God's grace alone that led to him being "all in" in his faithful actions for the biblical Jesus of Nazareth and not the Catholic version of Jesus. This Canaanite woman of great faith, Martin Luther in the Reformation and now us today. **They understood sola scriptura – We are beggars. It is true! They understood sola gratia – We are beggars. It is true! And this led them to action and sola fidei – We are beggars. It is true.**

How about you? There is much drift from the biblical teaching on the gospel, much drift from mercy, grace, love, forgiveness. Do you know the doctrines? Do you know the story they fit into? Do you know your place in that story and how to faithfully live that out in what you say and do? Turn to Jesus by turning to the Bible. Turn to Jesus by taking up the position of the Canaanite woman and Martin Luther and many others. We are beggars. It is true.

Communion Meditation

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

Remember and believe the body and blood of Jesus was given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!