

Breadcrumbs for the Dogs

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Date: 04 January 2026

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[0 : 00] If you'd open up your Bibles, please, to Matthew chapter 15. Matthew 15, we are in verses 21 to 39 this morning.

! Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, you are God and we are not.

You are the creator and we are your creatures. So Lord, it is right for us to humble ourselves before you, to be addressed by you in your word.

Give us ears to hear. Father, help us to take hold of the truths of your word with faith.

Grant us the humility and the poverty of spirit that you seek from all of us. As we're reminded through this passage of your wonderful grace and kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.

[1 : 16] In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word.

Let's honor God together by standing together as I read from Matthew 15, verse 21 to 39. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, Send her away, for she is crying out after us. He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she came and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me. And he answered, It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

[2 : 29] She said, Yes, Lord. Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered her, O woman, great is your faith.

Be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was healed instantly. Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there.

And great crowds came to him, bringing with him the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others. And they put them at his feet, and he healed them. So that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing.

And they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.

And I am unwilling to send them away hungry lest they faint on the way. And the disciples said to him, Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?

[3 : 39] And Jesus said to them, How many loaves do you have? They said, Seven, And a few small fish. And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish.

And having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples. And the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over.

Those who ate were 4,000 men, besides women and children. And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. The Jew-Gentile hostility is one of the oldest documented ethnic tensions and conflicts in world history.

Historian Robert S. Wistrich, who was the foremost scholarly authority on anti-Semitism in the 20th century, called anti-Semitism or hatred of Jews, the longest hatred because of its deep historical roots and longevity.

[4 : 49] This is partly due to Jewish exclusivity. They claim unique chosen status as the people of God. And for that reason, they have sought to maintain a distinct identity apart from the rest of the

world.

And Jews who strictly adhere to Old Testament law often separate themselves from secular society as well. This exclusive distinct identity creates a strong sense of internal cohesion, which makes them stick together and help each other.

And that strong internal cohesion often means alienation from those who are outside of that group, which could create mistrust and suspicion.

This in turn creates persecution and minority survival pressure, which then reinforces that strong sense of internal cohesion. And it goes on and on. Statesmen throughout the ages have repeatedly tried to forge peace treaties and make peace between Jews and Gentiles to no avail.

But our passage this morning teaches us that God himself has already provided the only solution that will work. Only solution to this long hatred and lasting divide between Jews and Gentiles.

[6 : 11] Because Jesus is the Jewish Messiah who brings salvation to the Gentiles. We're going to look at first the breadcrumbs for the dogs in verses 21 to 28.

And then we'll look at bread for the Gentiles in verse 29 to 39. We saw escalating tension between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes, the delegation that was sent from Jerusalem to investigate Jesus in the preceding passage.

And because of that escalating tension, Jesus now withdraws again from the Jewish crowds. He withdraws from Jewish territory altogether this time. And he goes to the district of Tyre and Sidon, the two of the most prominent cities in the ancient Phoenician kingdom.

Tyre and Sidon were notorious pagan cities, frequently denounced by the Old Testament prophets for being bitter enemies of God's people. Tyre and Sidon was a Christian. He says in Ezekiel 26, 2-3 that when Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, of Judah fell, Tyre gloated over Jerusalem saying, Aha, the gate of the peoples is broken.

It has swung open to me. I shall be replenished now that she is laid waste. And therefore the Lord God declared, Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you as the sea brings up its waves.

[7 : 37] That gives you a glimpse of that conflict between Israel and Tyre. 1 Kings 16 records that King Ahab, an Israelite king, did more to provoke the Lord to anger than any other king before him.

Why? Because he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal that he himself built in Israel. And why in the world did he do that?

Because he took for his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.

Baal was the chief god of the Syrophenician kingdom, of Tyre and Sidon. And due to Jezebel, a Sidonian princess, her influence, Baal worship was institutionalized in Israel, and the prophets of the Lord were systematically slaughtered, so that Israel almost lost its covenantal identity before God altogether.

Tyre and Sidon, therefore became bywords of unbelief and idolatry. The only other time that Tyre and Sidon are mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew is in Matthew 11, 21-22, where Jesus denounces the unbelieving cities of Israel by comparing them to Tyre and Sidon, saying, Woe to you, Chorazin!

[9 : 00] Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago and sat cloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

That's how bad the unbelief of these Jewish cities were. So bad that Tyre and Sidon compare favorably to them.

There were no cities in the ancient world so bad that was worse than Tyre and Sidon that Jesus could compare them to. So he compares them to Tyre and Sidon. It's to this district of Tyre and Sidon that Jesus has now retired.

And what follows is hardly surprising. It says in verse 22, And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out. Who else would you expect to come out of a region like that than a Canaanite?

Remember, by this point, Canaan is a name that is no longer used by the people of that region.

That's why in the parallel passage of this, found in Mark 7, 24-30, Mark doesn't call her a Canaanite woman.

[10 : 11] Instead, he calls her a Syrophenician woman, which is the term that was currently in use at the time. However, Matthew chooses to retain this intentionally, this anachronistic, theologically

loaded, Old Testament term, Canaanite, because he's trying to drive home a point.

A Canaanite woman is the exact kind of woman that Abraham and Isaac in Genesis made their sons swear never to marry.

The Canaanites were, from Israeli perspective, the squatters who occupied the promised land flowing with milk and honey that God had promised to them.

The people that Israel warred against generation after generation. The stubborn people that they were supposed to drive out from the land but never fully succeeded in driving out.

The very people who survived among the Israelites and led them into idolatry, which then led to their exile from their promised land. These are the inveterate enemies of the people of God.

[11 : 20] So out comes a Canaanite woman from that region. It's not surprising to meet her in Tyre and Sidon.

What is surprising, however, is this woman's profession of faith. She cries out to Jesus in verse 22, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.

My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. She addresses Jesus first as the son of David, which is a messianic title that Matthew accords to Jesus all throughout the gospel, saying that Jesus is God's promised anointed king, the savior who is to come from the line of David.

Not only that, this woman addresses Jesus as Lord. Lord is a word that can simply mean a polite sir, referring to someone who is a social superior to you in this culture.

However, in the gospel of Matthew, it's a much more theologically hefty term. Because the first time Jesus applies that term Lord to himself is in Matthew 7, 21, when he declares himself to be the final judge over all of humanity on the last day.

[12 : 34] That's Lord. And so, when she addresses Jesus as Lord, Matthew wants us to see a deeper import to that address, the implications of that acknowledgement.

This Canaanite woman acknowledges Jesus' authority and power. That's why she's come to ask for help with her daughter who is severely oppressed by a demon.

Literally, that means that's severely demonized. Demonized means you've come under the influence of a demon. And that influence can vary in strength. And in worst cases, like you see in the gathering demoniacs earlier in the Gospel of Matthew, you can be controlled by a demon, like a puppet is controlled by a puppeteer.

That's how bad it can be when you are demonized. And in this case, by this woman's own admission, her daughter is severely demonized.

So, who can help a person who is severely demonized? Only a person who possesses special, divine, spiritual authority.

[13 : 45] And this Canaanite woman recognizes that Jesus has that authority. This is why she takes great social risk to approach Jesus, a Jewish teacher. Given typical Jewish attitudes during her days, like I was mentioning earlier, toward Canaanites, she could have expected to be reviled and rebuked and driven away from Jesus' presence with verbal abuse.

But because her situation is so desperate, this woman seeks out Jesus and calls out to him relentlessly, have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. Jesus, however, completely ignores her. It says in verse 23, but he did not answer her a word. Not a word. A total silent treatment. Jesus doesn't even acknowledge her presence.

I imagine he's not even looking at her. But interestingly enough, Jesus also doesn't rebuke her or silence her.

And this is how we know that Jesus is not trying to be rude. He's simply playing hard to get in order to test the genuineness of her faith and her humility. Far from being discouraged by Jesus' silence, this Canaanite woman seems encouraged by Jesus' silence to keep crying out.

[15 : 13] Well, silence is better than a no. Maybe there's a chance. Perhaps he's thinking. Son of David, have mercy on me.

Lord, have mercy on me. My daughter is severely demonized. She's so persistent in crying out that Jesus' disciples are annoyed and exasperated to the point of begging Jesus themselves to send her away.

Send her away is a translation of a word that means to dismiss or even to divorce. The disciples are not asking Jesus to grant her her request. They're asking Jesus to deny her and dismiss her.

Please, Jesus, say something to her. Since she won't stop crying out otherwise, send her away. She's hounding us and we can't handle it anymore.

No. This prompts Jesus' first words to the Canaanite woman in verse 24. I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[16:19] When Jesus sent his 12 apostles out on their preaching mission earlier in chapter 10, he similarly instructed them, go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This was the mission that he had given them. Because until his, after his death and resurrection, the gospel goes forth first to the Jews for salvation is from the Jews. And then it goes from the Jews to the Samaritans and to the Gentiles and to the ends of the earth, as we see in the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

So Jesus is being consistent here. He appears to be listening to the disciples' request to send her away. woman, go home.

I'm not going to help you. I am a Jewish Messiah. You are a Canaanite woman. My responsibility is not to you. But she is unrelenting.

English author Agatha Christie once wrote, a mother's love for her child is like nothing else in the world. It knows no law, no pity. It dares all things and crushes down remorselessly all that stands in its path.

[17:33] Jesus' rejection only emboldens this Canaanite mom. He just spoke to me. He just spoke to me.

He heard me. He acknowledged me. This is my chance. And it says in verse 25, she came and knelt before him saying, Lord, help me.

She abases herself before Jesus by kneeling. Kneeling is a position of reverence, humility, submission, supplication.

It's a position that makes you lower and smaller, the other person bigger and higher. It's a defenseless, surrendered position, the exact opposite of an athletic ready stance or a fighting stance.

When you're kneeling on the ground, there's nothing you can do to protect yourself or defend yourself. You're completely surrendered at the mercy of someone else. This woman is not a deal maker approaching Jesus as equals, trying to shake hands and make a deal.

[18:50] She has not come to negotiate or bargain. She has come to beg. And beg. She does. As soon as Jesus says the first words, this woman is kneeling in front of him and begging, Lord, help me.

And in Jewish custom, you beg, you kneel, come down on your knees, you prostrate yourself, you touch your head to the floor. You beg, Lord, help me. Son of David, help me.

I will go even lower if I could. Please, you are the only hope for my daughter. Help me.

But Jesus is not done testing this woman's faith just yet. He answers her in verse 26, it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

This is when all the bystanders go, ooh. Now he's done it. He just said the D word.

[19:59] He crossed the big, big red line. He just called this Canaanite woman and her daughter, dogs. In contrast to the Jews who are children.

How rude and insensitive can he be, right? It's far worse than you and I might imagine because most dogs that we see around here in Cambridge are nice, pampered pets, right?

Some Cambridge dog owners call themselves moms and dads. Sorry if you're one of those people. Stop it. Yeah. And they call themselves moms and dads and then they feed their children only 100% human grade whole foods like salmon with cucumber and spinach salad.

Man, that sounds like my dinner. Or hard boiled eggs with steamed rice. I mean, eggs are expensive nowadays. I personally know someone who buys her pet poodle oodles of these donut peaches.

You guys know what I'm talking about? Those flat peaches? That's the most expensive variety of peach you can buy at H Mart. I guarantee you dogs were not treated like that in the ancient world.

[21:16] Most dogs in those days were not pets but they were dirty scavengers, low-life animals, and even the house dogs like the kind mentioned here would only ever eat the scraps and the throwaway foods.

Not only that, according to Leviticus 11.27, animals that go on all fours and walk on their paws are considered ritually unclean.

So while animals with cloven hoofs like sheep and goats were considered clean and fit for Jewish consumption, dogs, because they walk on all fours but don't have cloven hooves, have paws instead, were considered unclean.

And it's for that reason specifically that Jews of Jesus' day sometimes refer to Gentiles in a derogatory manner as dogs. Oh, look at those dogs.

It was their way of saying that they're unclean, unholy, unchosen people. It's almost like an ethnic slur. So with all that cultural background in mind, imagine yourself in this Canaanite woman's shoes.

[22 : 32] You've already abased yourself and humbled yourself to such a degree you've come down on your knees to beg for help from this Jewish teacher and he calls you, not just you, but her daughter too, dogs.

How would you respond to that? Who do you think you are? Who are you calling dogs?

Do you know how I make a living in this world? You know how hard I work to take care of my daughter? You arrogant, chauvinistic, racist. You're holier than thou.

Keep your bread for yourself. I'm out of here. I think that's how most people respond. But this Canaanite woman keeps surprising us.

She says in verse 27, Yes. Yes, Lord. This is one of my favorite characters in the Gospels.

[23 : 52] Yes, Lord. Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Yes, Lord.

You are the master. They are the children. Yes, Lord. I'm just a dog. A Gentile, unclean dog.

You are right, master. But do not even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. How much lower can she go?

And so Jesus commends her in verse 28. It's the moment he's been waiting for. Oh, woman, great is your faith.

Let it be done for you as you desire. The Canaanite woman's great faith leads to a great miracle from Jesus.

[25 : 05] It says her daughter was healed instantly. There are many striking parallels between this account of the healing of this woman's demonized daughter, Canaanite woman's demonized daughter, and the healing of the centurion, the Gentile centurion's servant early in Matthew chapter 8.

They both deal with Gentiles. In both cases, the one who comes to beg and to plead with Jesus is not the one who needs help. They ask on behalf of another. And in both cases, they are commended for an extraordinary faith that exceeds the faith of their Jewish peers.

And in both situations, Jesus heals them with a word instantly, remotely. Not by going there and laying hands on them, which he does in normal circumstances, but from a distance.

He just says the word and they are healed. And these are the only two examples of healing that happens like that in the entire Gospel of Matthew. Amazing miracle. And how can it be that only these two Gentiles in the entire Gospel are commended for extraordinary faith?

This is the only person in the entire Gospel who is commended for having great faith. It's because of that great faith of seeing that God is who he really says he is.

[26 : 27] And Jesus is who he really says he is that enables this Canaanite woman to humble herself in this way before God. If you read this story and you can't get over how rude and insensitive Jesus and ethnocentric Jesus seems to be then you don't quite yet see God in all of his glory and sovereignty.

You don't yet see his son in all of his glory and majesty. Jesus said that he came as a shepherd to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

If you go to Isaiah 40 it describes God as a shepherd who tends to his flock and who gathers the lamb in his arms. And this is the greatness of the God the shepherd that Isaiah 40 described.

It says that he has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked up the heavens with the span and enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales.

Let's digress with me for just a minute and think about this. Imagine this. This is what God is like. 321 million cubic miles of ocean water.

[27 : 41] It says God measures it in the hollow of his hand. The observable heavenly skies the space 93 billion light years in diameter.

God marks it off with the span of his hand. All the immovable mountains of the earth the Andes Himalayas the Rocky Mountains the Appalachian Mountains God weighs them on his scales.

It continues Isaiah 40 the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are accounted as the dust on the scales. all the nations are as nothing before Him.

They are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness. All the nations of the earth are like God says drop from a bucket. That's how small they are.

If all the nations are like that then how small is one Canaanite woman? That's how puny we are compared to God.

[28 : 58] God can choose to do whatever He wants to whomever He wants. He is sovereign He is the potter and we are the clay. And that's not even considering our sin and rebellion against Him.

God is our creator but rather than worshipping our creator as we ought to as creatures we have worshipped our fellow creatures the created things.

in fact we have fashioned for ourselves with our own hands and with our own imaginations so called God's idols for ourselves that we worship. God is our just and wise king who has ruled over us with nothing but kindness and benevolence but we have been traitors to His kingdom.

We have sought to overthrow Him and usurp His throne for ourselves. We have allied ourselves with the enemies of God because we want to be kings and rulers of our own lives. God is our heavenly Father to whom we owe our very existence.

He provides for all our needs. He makes the sun rise and set. He sends rain in its season but we are disobedient unfilial ungrateful children who have disowned their own father.

[30 : 20] God is our betrothed covenant partner but we have been like an unfaithful bride, a prostitute that whores after other lovers, other gods. All of our righteous deeds and good works that we do are woefully inadequate to make any of that up and yet do we have the bare faced audacity to feel entitled before God.

God to approach God and make demands. Are we really right to think oh poor Canaanite woman she hasn't done anything wrong?

Absolutely not. She deserves far worse than the treatment that she receives. We deserve far worse than the treatment that she receives.

what we really deserve is condemnation and damnation eternal separation from God and the unquenchable fires of divine judgment in hell.

That is what every single human being in the world deserves apart from Christ. And that's the amazing thing about this woman's faith.

[31 : 40] This Canaanite woman gets that. Understands that. She knows as a Canaanite woman from Tyre and Sidon that she has no claim upon the ministry of this Jewish Messiah.

Her people have opposed Israel have oppressed the people of God. She has no rights or entitlements that she can cling to. She knows that. She's in no position to bargain so she does the only sensible thing that a person in her position can do which is to collapse onto her knees and beg. And that's the reality not only for a Canaanite woman but for all of humanity. I can add here that even Jews have no sense cannot have any sense of right or entitlement before God at this point. Yes they are the covenant people of God who have received the promises of God but they have forsaken their covenant with God by their idolatry. That's why they are now a subjugated and conquered people here at this time under the Romans.

They have broken the laws of God. How can they possibly expect God to fulfill his covenant obligations when they have not fulfilled theirs?

[33 : 04] all of us are debtors and beggars and when we recognize this precious truth we stop clapping back at God.

We stop talking back at God. We lay our hands on our mouths like Job does and we repent in dust and ashes. the recognition of this spiritual reality is what Jesus calls in Matthew 5 3 in the first beatitude the poverty of spirit and poverty of spirit is essential for salvation.

I've been praying for you this past week that God would grant you abject poverty of spirit a total poverty of spirit to see that God owes us nothing and that we owe him everything to know that God holds all the cards we hold no card to see that God is completely in the right and we are completely in the wrong and yet and yet God loves us undeserving sinners and shows us mercy in Jesus Christ that's the blessing of poverty of spirit is it makes the grace and mercy of God sweet and when you have that poverty of spirit you cannot grumble long in life you overflow! with gratitude Praise! And that's why Jesus commends this Canaanite woman as having great faith of course Jesus knew all along that this is what he was headed to he was simply testing her and

providing her an opportunity to demonstrate her faith so that all those who come after her like us might follow her example how do we know that because we've seen signs all along throughout Jesus ministry up to this point that his ministry and his blessings will eventually encompass all of the Gentiles in chapter 8 Jesus already ministered to some Gentiles the Gentile centurion like I mentioned earlier the gather and demoniac so it's not true that Jesus never ministered to the Gentiles also we saw in Jesus genealogy in chapter 1 that Matthew intentionally mentioned four women Tamar Rahab Ruth

[35 : 59] Bathsheba all of them Canaanite woman pagan woman in the genealogy of the Jewish Messiah and then Jesus was visited and worshipped by Gentile magi in chapter 2 and decisively in the immediately preceding passage that I preached on last week Jesus abolished the clean and unclean distinction between foods clean foods and unclean food he abolished that distinction and in doing so he also challenged the very basis for the Jewish Gentile distinction clean people unclean people and it is no accident that right after he is teaching in his declaration that there is no such thing as outside external things that make people unclean that he goes straight to the district of Tyre and Sidon to minister to!

Jesus knows Jesus knows full well that after his death and resurrection that he will call all Gentiles to himself that he will send his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations so Jesus is acting here like a good teacher who sometimes plays the role of skeptic and challenges the assumptions of his students and ask probing questions not to tear them down but to draw out from them deeper insight and stronger conclusions just as a precious diamond can only form under intense 1300 degrees Celsius heat and millions of pounds of force per square foot it's the intense pressure of Jesus testing that brings out this precious jewel of the Canaanite woman's faith if you're here this morning and you are not yet a Christian let me ask you do you feel like you deserve God's love do you feel that you have earned the right to heaven if when Jesus says it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs your response is I'm not a dog I'm a good person I deserve a seat at that table then you've got it all wrong you cannot be saved that way poverty of spirit humility which comes from faith acknowledging that you come empty handed before God bringing nothing to the table is a requisite condition for your salvation but perhaps some others of you here this morning feel deeply unworthy already you feel keenly your guilt and shame you feel that God could never forgive you for your sin or accept someone like you if that's you think again say like this

Canaanite woman yes Lord yes Lord it's true that's me yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table whether you were an idolatrous Canaanite who seduced and killed the Jews whether you were a Nazi German who massacred Jews in concentration camps or a Hamas militant who was raped and killed Jews or whether you're a murderer or an adulterer or a liar or a cheater whatever you have done wherever you have come from if you acknowledge your own sinfulness your own spiritual poverty before God your own moral bankruptcy before God and you come trusting in Jesus who died for the sins of his people that he died on the cross and was raised from the dead for your sake then you too can come to the table Jesus said earlier in Matthew 7 6 do not give dogs what is holy do not throw your pearls to pigs but he throws the children's bread to the dogs here why because he's redefining redefining who the dogs are this woman's faith enabled her to see her spiritual reality and that in turn enabled her to humble herself before Jesus in such a way that proves that she's she's no dog she's invited to the table as the daughter of the king so if you feel that you are a gentile dog undeserving sinner come for the crumbs that fall from the table and you'll find that they are not crumbs at all you're going to receive the full loaves of bread at the seat of the table of

[41 : 25] God within his family that's exactly what we see in the second half of this passage but I promise you the second half of this passage I'll be much briefer in verses 29 to 31 we see a summary of Jesus ministry much like what we saw earlier in chapter 14 34 to 36 and there the summary was preceded by Jesus miraculous feeding of the 5,000 here the summary is succeeded by Jesus miraculous feeding of the 4,000 so there's clearly some kind of structural pattern that Matthew is building here there is however one key difference in chapter 14 summary Jesus was in Jewish territory here in chapter 15 Jesus is still on the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee because he has not yet crossed over onto the other side the parallel account in Mark 7 31 explicitly confirms this that Jesus is here in the Decapolis which is a Gentile region that explains the somewhat odd conclusion of the crowd in verse 31 it says they glorify the

God of Israel that's an interesting way to put that because the response of the Galilean Jews wasn't described in that manner if Matthew is talking about Jews here it would have been much more natural simply to say oh they glorify their God no but it says here they glorify the God of Israel because they're Gentiles they're glorifying not their own ancestral gods but the God of Israel so that detail totally transforms the significance of these few verses verse 30 says and great crowds came to him bringing with them the lame the blind the crippled the mute and many others and they put them at his feet and healed them this summary list of ailments here the lame the blind the crippled the mute echoes precisely the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 35 5 to 6 that Jesus himself cited earlier in Matthew 11 5 to reassure John the Baptist I am indeed the prophesied

Messiah that was to come I am the one who makes the lame leap like a deer make the blind see make the mute hear make the crippled walk and what's amazing the unexpected twist of this redemptive story is that Matthew takes this prophecy about a Jewish Messiah what he does for his people the Jews and then applies it for the Gentiles he's come for them too that trend continues into the next paragraph about the feeding of the 4000 in verses 32 to 39 I won't get into the details because this story is almost identical to the feeding of the 5000 in chapter 14 verse 13 to 21 that I preached on last month on Sunday December 14 so if you're not satisfied with my treatment of this passage right now you go back and listen to that one okay yeah there is a notable difference still however between this passage and again it's that

Jesus is in Gentile territory he doesn't cross over into the Jewish region of Magadan until verse 39 it says and the two words used for baskets the one in chapter 14 and the one in chapter 15 are two different words the one used in chapter 14 is the type of basket the wicker baskets that the Jews use the basket mentioned chapter 15 is a different kind of basket and later in Jesus summary of his feeding miracles in chapter 16 Jesus maintains that distinction by using two different words for basket in Matthew 16 verses 9 to 10 and this is why I think there are seven baskets here full of broken pieces left over in verse 37 what's the point what's the difference in verse you know in chapter 14 verse 20 they had 12 baskets full of the broken pieces left over 12 seems better than seven right

I mean did Jesus his second miracle was just not quite as powerful you know not quite as many left over is that what's going on no I don't think that's it at all the numbers are symbolic 12 12 is a number that represents Israel the 12 sons of Jacob the 12 tribes of Israel so it's fitting that in the feeding of the 5,000 Jews that they have 12 baskets full left over to show that Jesus the Messiah the bread of life sent from heaven is sufficient to provide for all of them but why the seven leftover baskets this time because seven is the number seven days the number seven comes to symbolize completeness and fullness all throughout God's written word this is why in Revelation 3 5 Jesus is described as the one who has the seven spirits of God and who holds the seven stars in his right hand not because

[46 : 39] God actually has more than one spirit but he's describing the fullness of God's spirit his omnipresence and his immensity and his fullness the seven stars represent Jesus' perfect complete authority over all the heavenly angels and the churches that they represent so then when there are seven baskets full of the broken pieces of bread after feeding the 4,000 Gentiles plus women and children we're supposed to infer from this that Jesus the Jewish Messiah is not for the Jews only he's also here for the Gentiles I saw some of you guys taking pictures I'm assuming that the the chiasm was already projected on the screen right yeah so that's a it's a helpful way to see it you see Jesus is feeding of the 5,000 Jews with 12 baskets left over matching Jesus feeding of the 4,000 Gentiles with seven baskets left over and then they're matched by testing of

Peter's faith and Jesus comment get this that Peter has little faith and then Jesus is testing of the Canaanites woman's faith and telling her that she has great faith and right in the middle sandwiched between all of that Jesus is powerful epoch changing declaration it's not what comes from the outside in but what comes from the inside out that makes people unclean this is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in 49 6 that it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth that's what Jesus has come to do and what is it that prevented the Jews and Gentiles from coming together in past ages it's the law it's the law of God the Torah the Jews had the law the Gentiles did not Gentiles did not obey the law and therefore they were cursed Jesus fulfills the law by satisfying the justice of God by dying on the cross for our sins and absorbing that curse of the law in his own flesh so that he can break down

the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles that's why Jesus says after his feeding miracle in a parallel account in John 6 after the feeding the 5,000 Jesus said I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst I mentioned to you last month when I preached on that passage that the sequence of verbs that are used to describe Jesus miracle in the feeding of the multitudes exactly mirrors the sequence of verbs used in the institution of the

Lord's supper he took the bread he gave thanks he broke it and he gave it it's because Jesus is the bread of life I'll conclude with this imagine being poor and starved having nothing to eat I've never known that kind of hunger and I hope you never have either imagine your stomach feeling hollowed out you feel cold because your body has no food to burn your thoughts start to get muddled because you have no energy you can't make simple decisions anymore you hate that you have so little self control over your body because all you can think of is food you hear the sound of everyone eating around you the irreverent chewing of people around you who have never known hunger the quiet hum of a refrigerator that you can never open you look longingly!

at the neat and abundant rows of food displays at the grocery store like a religious sanctuary that is close to someone like you smell everything around you the savory aroma of freshly baked bread that you cannot break and you cannot eat friends that painful poverty and hunger is the spiritual reality of every human being apart from Christ and there's only one who can satisfy hunger and it's Jesus Christ he has come because he is a gracious master and he died on the cross to offer himself as the bread of life he was broken that we might feed that we might eat and be nourished unto eternal life that's the good news the gospel of

[52 : 21] Jesus Christ have you tasted and seen that the Lord is good let's pray that we all do heavenly!

Father Lord we are poor we hunger and thirst for righteousness Father thank you for sending your only son Jesus Christ to be our bread of life thank you that you take Gentile dogs and make them children and heirs fellow heirs with Christ and thank you for giving us a seat at your table Lord help us always to live with this with the humility that this

Canaanite woman demonstrated for us that you might be our all in all that you might receive all glory honor and praise that even the most heinous evildoers may see us and say well if that's what it takes if they can be safe then surely I can come for the crumbs Lord use us that way as messengers and witnesses of Jesus Christ in Jesus name we pray amen