

Doggy Faith

- I. What makes a saint, a saint?
 - A. Today our scripture concentrates on what God looks for in a follower,
 1. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, asks , “Did God reject [God’s] people?
Of course not!
 2. God seeks the disobedient in order to show mercy.
 3. In Matthew, Jesus explains “clean” and “unclean”
 4. Then, he shares another parable.
 - B. Jesus is traveling in the region of Tyre and Sidon (Today’s Lebanon)
 1. A woman from the region approaches him crying out, “Lord, son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering from demon possession.”
 2. Jesus didn’t answer.
 3. So, the disciples figure it’s time for them to add their voices to the discussion. “Tell her to go away, she keeps crying out after us.”
 - C. Jesus finally responds:
 1. I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.
 2. The woman knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she cried.
 3. He replied, “ It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”
 4. Let’s take a pause right here.
- II. The Jews and the Gentiles of the region called each other “dogs” It was definitely a slander-not a pet name.
 - A. The Syrophenician also referred to as Canaanites uses words like “Lord” and “Son of David” to signify she knew he was a Jew of high importance (maybe she had actually heard of him.) , yet, he calls her people dogs.
 1. Was Jesus goading the woman to test her knowledge of Judaism or ‘the Way’?
 2. It’s more likely that Jesus is growing weary of all the people wanting a miracle.
 3. Does she think that ONCE he heals her daughter she would suddenly be a disciple?
 4. Or is she just a character in the story to show God’s plan of salvation and the meaning of human faith?
 - B. **The Pharisees and scribes thought that God was only calling the Jews to a life moral purity. (Richard Donovan)**
 1. **They were the moral police and keepers of the law.**

2. The only way to be saved was through strict adherence to the law and the will of God.
3. They had the torah to lead them; but, as in today, the torah did not cover every possible scenario.
- 4.. Between 200BC and 500 AD, The Rabbis developed the Mishnah and the Talmud consisting of 36,000 pages. (Lockyer, 1029)
5. The Pharisees took their faith seriously-their attentiveness to detail reflected their devotion to God.
6. The problem was there was so much detail that you couldn't see the forest for the trees.
7. Instead of helping people understand God, the rules put up barriers that separated them from God.

III. So here we are still trying to figure out who are the saints and who are the sinners.

A. Some of our folks In churches think that they are justified in keeping people in line much like the Pharisees of old.

1. To be fair, even many of the modern day law keepers are loving God with all their hearts and giving of their time and resources to support the church.
2. BUT Dr. Phillip McLarty confessed in his article on SermonWriter that some of the difficult people to love he's ever known were the religious people.
3. They get so caught up with themselves that other people can never be or do enough to be true followers of Jesus.

B. In fact, when some people hear the word "Christian", they turn and go the other way, claiming all Christians are "hypocrites"

IV Listening to Jesus talk to the woman whose daughter needs salvation, you might be tempted to say Jesus is being a little hypocritical.

A. He called the woman 's people dogs.

1. So does that mean if we identify with her plight, we're dogs too?
2. Does he really think anyone can keep all the rules, all the time?

B. Before we get offended and stomp out of the church, let's pick up Jesus' story and see what he does think.

V. After being turned down in her plea, the woman decides she's not going to take no for an answer.

A. She retorts: Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs from their master's table.

1. Did Jesus take offense at this short statement?

2. No, His eyes are opened to her sincerity.
 3. He responds: Woman, great is your faith! Be it done to you as you desire.”
 - 4 Her daughter was healed instantly!
- B. So what does this “dog” have that the disciples and pharisees didn’t.
1. HUMILITY
 2. When we have the humility to let go of every last vestiges of pride and throw herself at the feet of the master, she secures a place for herself among Jesus’ followers.
 3. So, this passage is for everyone who has ever felt like they have “fallen short” – this Canaanite woman’s faith had nothing to do with how good she was, how devoted to God she was, how many good deeds she had done for others.
 4. It had to do with her need for POWER greater than herself and her willingness to confess it. God has a special place in his heart for the underdog.
- Dare to have the faith of a dog and take your place at the Master’s feet.

Praise be to God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

first

Our ~~second~~ **reading** comes from Paul's letter to the **Romans**, chapter 11: verses **1-2a**, and **29-32** found in your **Pew Bible** on pages **1761, 1763**

- 1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.
- 2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.
- 29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.
- 30 Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience,
- 31 so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too now may receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.
- 32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

- 10 Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand.
11 What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'"
12 Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"
13 He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.
14 Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."
15 Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."
16 "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them.
17 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?
18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'
19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.
20 These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"
- 21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.
22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."
23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."
24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."
25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.
26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."
27 "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."
28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.