

PENTECOST 11

MATTHEW 15:21-28

A LESSON ON RELATIONSHIPS

AUGUST 16, 2020

Our Bible story for today teaches us how to find wholeness and healing even in confrontation and conflict. The Canaanite woman was not Jewish. She was not even from Israel. This is the first time Jesus is outside his native country. Jesus never travelled more than 200 miles from the confines of Israel. Now he is in a foreign country and gets recognized by a foreigner for who he really is. She calls him Lord and Son of David. She asks him to heal her demon-possessed daughter.

Seven insights into a situation of potential polarization and conflict:

1. Both the woman and Jesus had the ability to relate deeply without prejudice and hatred.
2. They both had an ability to look into the other's heart and know their need.
3. These abilities come with great mental health. Health allows us to thrive with truth, compassion and humor. Mentally unhealthy people operate out of their own needs, complexes, conflicts, anger, stress and frustration. On the other hand, mentally healthy people function according to the needs around them and bring the resources needed.
4. Both Jesus and the woman loved each other for what and who they were. They both disregarded culture, race, class, color, gender, nationality and religion.
5. The disciples tried to separate them and to protect Jesus from "them." Jesus overcomes their attempts of separation and disunity.
6. The conversation, the back and forth dialogue, the repartee, sounds tense. Instead, it is humorous. Jesus seems to call her a dog. The actual Hebrew word is more like "puppy". She recognizes the crumbs not as a derogatory statement but as the bread of life coming from the Master's table. This is a playful conversation with each other. It communicates an enjoyment of each other.
7. The ultimate goals of Jesus are healing, unity, love and the gift of faith. Jesus says "Great is your faith." The daughter was healed instantly.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we sometimes come to you fearful and distraught. We come to you grumpy and hurt. Give us warm relationships, friendship and humor. Give us your loving personality. Thank you for this amazing Canaanite woman and what she taught us about relating to you. Amen.