



August 16, 2026 | *Sounds Like an Attitude Adjustment* | Pastor Eddie Eddy

Matthew 15:21-28 The Faith of a Gentile Woman

²¹ Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely."

²³ But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. "Tell her to go away," they said. "She is bothering us with all her begging."

²⁴ Then Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel."

²⁵ But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, "Lord, help me!"

²⁶ Jesus responded, "It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

²⁷ She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table."

²⁸ "Dear woman," Jesus said to her, "your faith is great. Your request is granted." And her daughter was instantly healed.

L: This is the word of God for the people of God. **P: Thanks be to God.**

"Sounds Like an Attitude Adjustment"

Let me ask you all something. Has there ever been something that you have wanted so bad that you could almost taste it? Something that you believed...wholeheartedly... that you couldn't live without. Something that kept you up at night just thinking about it.

If I'm doing my job right...you should be thinking about something right now. What was it? What was the something you yearned for? Let me ask you this...Was it for you...or was it for someone else? Was it something that would bring you some kind of creature comfort...like a new car that was just the greatest deal ever...or a new job that would put a nice little dent in your debt and raise your credit score? Was it a new relationship?

It's the bigger things in life that tend to cause that burning desire in us. And it's those desires that move us to do things we wouldn't normally do.

I might be really hungry...but if the line in Wendys is wrapped around the building...taco bell will do just fine. I wouldn't get all worked up over a hamburger.

But if someone in my family was in dire need...I would do almost anything to get them the help they needed.

Quick example...My mother-in-law was in the hospital because of her Emphysema. She could barely breathe, and the only time she would get any relief...was right after she received her breathing treatment. She watched the clock between those treatments.

One day while were there visiting with her...her treatment didn't show up when it was scheduled. The nurse said it would be there shortly. Well...shortly came and went...and no treatment. The waiting went on way too long...and quite honestly... after asking a couple of times and being brushed off rudely...I came to the conclusion that the nurse simply didn't care.

Now let me preface this story with the fact that my Mother-in-law and I were probably not the closest of friends...and that this was a long...long time before God called me into ministry. While we might not have agreed on some things...I still respected my mother-in-law. The truth remains... my Mother-in-law did not deserve to be lied to or mistreated in any way by this nurse. Watching her lay there and fight for each breathe...aroused this anxiety and such much compassion in me...that I had to do something that may have been a bit drastic to some people.

Short pause

You know...this nurse may have had a lot to do. She may have been short on help that day. Or maybe...maybe she was just having a bad day and that affected her attitude. I don't know...and quite honestly...in that moment and in that context...I didn't care. Because...she was the one...at that point...that had the responsibility...and the means...to help my failing mother-in-law...

As this nurse left the room...I saw an opportunity for her and I to have a "little chat" in the hallway...and I made her what I believed to be a reasonable proposition... and guess what...the breathing treatment guy showed up within a few seconds after our conversation.

You see...in my mind...and that time...that nurse was standing in the way of the care and healing my mother-in-law needed. Our talk...well...it helped her to adjust her attitude

Pause

As we look at our Gospel message this morning...I think about the yearning in that Gentile mother's soul as she went to drastic measures to seek healing and care for her failing daughter. She was willing to do anything. She comes to Jesus because she must have heard about both His willingness and His ability to be just such a healer.

And then...in this same passage...I hear the words of the disciples as they dismiss her without a care in the world. "Tell her to go away," they said. "She is bothering us with all her begging."

SHORT PAUSE

Imagine how disheartening it must be for this woman as she experiences this level of disrespect and rejection.

And then...to add insult to injury...follow that up with the words of Jesus.

"I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel."

"It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

SP

Wow...is this the Jesus we want to make sure every man, woman, and child accepts as their personal savior? He just called this woman...this desperate Gentile mother...a dog. He just demeaned this woman who is willing to humble herself before him...probably on the ground...face down...pleading to him. She is begging for help only on the **reputation** of some guy she has only heard about...because...all she can think about is her failing child.

PAUSE

The response from Jesus sounds so out of character, so harsh. So I want to know...Did Jesus really respond in the way that the text says he did...or...is there a more to this story? For those of us who put our faith in Jesus...there has to be something else going on here. Because who would take seriously...any church that would act that way?

That's why we sometimes need a little background to understand the rest of the story...otherwise we might end up with the wrong attitude ourselves. As we dig in a little...we may just find that Jesus saw that the woman was really the one with the right attitude.

PAUSE

So here is a little history. The relationship between the Canaanites (or Gentiles, as our translation says) and the Jews was about as friendly and accepting as what we see today between groups that are deeply divided. Neither side was really leaving much room for respectful conversation. In fact, many Jews had a name for the Canaanites. They called them dogs. That's how deep the prejudice ran between these groups.

So, if there was so much hostility between these two groups, why...why would Jesus intentionally take His disciples there?

If you read through Matthew's Gospel, you will begin to notice something. Jesus had a habit of leading His disciples into places where they would have to confront their own assumptions. Think about the feeding of the five thousand. Think about the night on the water when Peter stepped out of the boat.

On the surface...those stories seem to be about hungry crowds and raging storms. But if you look a little closer, who was really learning the lesson? It was the disciples.

Here's the thing...Jesus was constantly shaping them, stretching them, and teaching them to see the world through God's eyes instead of their own expectations.

And that's exactly what's happening in this story. If we slow down and look beneath the surface, we have to ask ourselves: Who is Jesus really talking to? Is His primary lesson for the Canaanite woman...or is He using this encounter to expose the hearts of His own faithful, yet still very naïve, disciples?

PAUSE

When Jesus made his comment...and called this faithful mom a dog...he wasn't so much sending a message to this lady...as he was to the disciples. I'm pretty sure that one thing we can all agree on...is that Jesus has an uncanny ability to read people...especially his own handpicked disciples.

I'm going to read the passage again with a little different inflection...and I want you to see if this don't sound like an attitude adjustment for his listeners.

READ

21 Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely."

23 But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word.

(I picture Jesus looking to his disciples and waiting for their response. and this is what he gets.)

Then his disciples urged him to send her away. (sound familiar? In the feeding of the 5000, they wanted to send them away too. Send them away to get something to eat because it's getting late. Now they say to Jesus again...) "Tell her to go away," they said. "She is bothering us with all her begging."

24 Then Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel."

25 But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, "Lord, help me!"

(and I still picture Jesus looking into the eyes of the disciples as he answers this mother)

26 Jesus responded, "It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

27 She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their **masters' table**."

(I can see Jesus looking right into the eyes of his disciples as he utters his response to her...)

28 "Dear woman," Jesus said to her, "**your faith is great. Your request is granted.**" And her daughter was instantly healed.

Sounds different from that perspective...doesn't it?

PAUSE

Maybe it's just me because I use sarcasm to make my point sometimes...but can't you just feel Jesus ripping the disciples a new one as he blesses this woman...despite his disciples request? Here they are...they had signed on to follow Jesus, just like we have. And just like us today...they had been steeped in the stereotypes of their own culture. To them Canaanites were dogs. And even though they had witnessed this over and over... they still hadn't figured out that with God...no one is a dog.

This passage sound like an attitude adjustment to me...and I hope it does to you as well.

That day...the disciples learned another life changing lesson. And we...as the disciples of today...we are called to learn that lesson too. That's what it means to be a disciple. We are in a constant state of learning and repenting. Each opportunity we encounter...should be a learning experience that comes with some kind of an attitude adjustment.

Many of us have had the experience of someone mirroring our own attitude back at us. It's not always comfortable...is it? When we get a taste of our own medicine, we may understand how bitter it can be. Jeanie does that to me... and I always tell her...hey...don't use my own logic against me. But in reality...it's humbling when we hear our own bigotry, or greed, or hate, or envy, or lust, or double standards , or self-righteousness as a way to adjust our way of thinking?

So let me leave you with a challenge this week. Before you dismiss someone...before you decide that they're too difficult, too different, too broken, too needy, or maybe even beyond your time and attention...stop and ask yourself a simple question: **Am I looking at this person through my eyes...or through the eyes of Jesus?**

Because the truth is, we all have people we'd rather avoid. Sometimes it's the addict. Sometimes it's the person living on the street. Sometimes it's the family member who keeps making bad decisions. Sometimes it's the neighbor whose politics drive us crazy. Sometimes it's the person sitting on the other side of the sanctuary. But every one of those people bears the image of God and every one of them matters to Jesus.

The longer we walk with Christ, the more our attitudes should begin to look like His. Friends...our spiritual maturity isn't measured by how many Bible verses we know or how many church services we've attended. It's measured by whether our hearts are becoming more compassionate...more gracious...more patient...and more willing to see people the way Jesus sees them and utilizes them to adjust us.

So maybe this week Jesus isn't asking us to fix somebody else's attitude. Maybe He's inviting us...to let Him...adjust ours. Let's become the kind of disciples who never stand between people and the grace of God...but instead become the ones who help lead them to it.

To God be the glory:

Amen.