

UNRAVELLING RACISM: PART 4 – ACTION

The following questions are to help stimulate your discussion of *the* implications and applications of the sermon. The order of the questions roughly corresponds to the structure of the sermon, however, feel free to skip around (or simply skip) as you see fit.

Text

Matt. 15:21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting 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.” He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Warm Up

1. Have you already begun to participate in action(s) that work to unravel racism from your heart/life/neighbourhood? Have you found that you are already becoming more aware of racial dynamics as a result of this series?

Questions

2. How have you dealt with the story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman in the past? What interpretations have you heard?
3. Lee suggested that story gives us a picture of Jesus’ struggle/temptation with discerning the Father’s will regarding the Gentile blessing. Dale Bruner described Jesus’ *Gentile Gethsemane* writing, “This woman’s faith “healed,” as it were, Jesus own bent or bowed (not broken) perception of the will of his Father...Jesus’ knowledge of the will of God becomes clear as a summer sky: “My Father wants to help this woman, and so, *soon* all Gentiles.”¹ Do you find this interpretation convincing? Why or why not?

¹ Dale Bruner, *Matthew A Commentary: The Churchbook – Matthew 13-28*, 104.

4. The Canaanite woman was not willing to wait to receive God’s blessing for the Gentiles. In the early ninetieth century, many Christians agree that slavery would and should stop but many were not willing to hasten its end. People like William Wilberforce fought to bring future abolition to the present. In his Letter from a Birmingham, Jail Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote:

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

Commenting on the story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman N.T. Wright writes, “ What then, are the issues we face today? Which promises of God have we imagined might be fulfilled in the distant future, but ought to be claimed in the present with a prayer and faith which refuses to be put off?”² How would you respond to Wright and to King?

5. Lee, Kate, and Natasha suggested the following ways to actively participate in the dismantling of racism. Do you send an invitation to engage in any of these actions? If so, which one(s)?
- A. Cultivate **cross-racial relationships**
 - B. Practice **humble listening** and be willing to have your mind changed by hearing the lived experience of others.
 - C. Develop **racial literacy**
6. What role might the Church play in dismantling racism? What role might Cedar Park play?

For Further Engagement

Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey by Sarah Shin

² Tom, Wright, *Matthew for Everyone: Part 1 – Chapters 1-15*, 201-202