

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
1308 Meadowbrook Drive
Syracuse, NY 13224-1718
Website: stalbansyracuse.org
Church email: stalbans.syr@gmail.com

The Rev. Julie E. Calhoun-Bryant, Rector
Email: julieatalban@gmail.com
Cell: 315-416-7133



Emmanuel Episcopal Church
400 W. Yates Street
East Syracuse, NY 13057
Find the Sunday Service on Facebook
facebook.com/emmanueleastsyracuse
Email: emmanuel13057@gmail.com

The Rev. Julie E. Calhoun-Bryant,
Priest-in-Charge

Jesus and the Canaanite Woman: Mother Julie's Sermon for August 19/20

Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ... It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

Why would Jesus be so harsh with the Canaanite woman? What's going on here? Although we cannot know the mind of Jesus, we can deduce some things by looking at Jesus' actions as a whole. So, what do we know about the Jesus of the Gospels?

First, we know that Jesus was never cruel. There were many opportunities when he could have been. He could have let them stone the woman caught in adultery. Instead he told her accusers, "Let the one of you who is without sin cast the first stone." After all her accusers walked away Jesus told the woman, "Neither do I accuse you. Go and sin no more." When blind Bartimaeus called out to him from the side of the road in Jericho he could have ignored him and let the crowd go on hushing him. After all, he was on his way to Jerusalem and crucifixion. Instead he stopped walking, asked for Bartimaeus to be brought to him, and healed him. Furthermore, he could have loudly condemned the Jewish tax collectors who collected taxes for Rome and increased his popularity. Instead he befriended them and even dined in their homes - shocking! No, Jesus was never cruel.

Second, we know that Jesus was laser-focused on his God-given mission. He spent 40 days in the desert after his baptism talking with God and getting his head straight about what it was God wanted him to do, how he was to use his miraculous power, what his message would be. Jesus returned to God again and again in prayer to stay on the right track and not be derailed by the needs of the crowds around him. Jesus of the Gospels believed that his mission was to Israel, to call them to repent and turn back to God. This Canaanite woman was not a worshipper of the God of Israel.

Third, although he was a man born in first century Israel, we know he wasn't dismissive of women. He had a long conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. (Jews and Samaritans both worshipped the God of Abraham and Moses, but quite differently.) We know women traveled with him and cared for the needs of him and the disciples. We know that women were the first witnesses of his resurrection, even though a woman's word wouldn't hold up in court.

And finally, we know that Jesus was compassionate. From the Feeding of the 5000, to the many healings he performed, to his raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, Jesus had a heart full of love for God's people.

So, why is Jesus harsh with the foreign woman who is asking for his help? I think that the clue is to be found in the woman's worship of pagan gods and Jesus' laser focus on his mission to the people of Israel prior to his resurrection. Jesus healed those who believed in the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was not one of the itinerant healers who charged for their services, as did others of his day and age. Jesus was not a miracle man for hire. The Canaanite woman, however, was stubbornly persistent and she addressed Jesus as Son of David, a Jewish messianic title. That was enough for Jesus to strike up a conversation with her.

Jesus: I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Woman: Lord, help me.

Jesus: It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.

Woman: Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.

Jesus: Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.

Against all odds, this Canaanite woman believed that the Jewish Son of David had the power to heal her daughter. When Jesus recognized that faith in her he healed her girl. Remember how Jesus was unable to do nothing more than heal a few people because of the lack of belief among the people of his hometown of Nazareth? Faith is the key that unlocks the power of God.

Faith isn't a magic bullet. I'm not saying that if you believe hard enough God will grant your request. The healings that Jesus did were in accordance with God's will. Jesus spent a lot of time in prayer making sure that he was doing what God asked of him. Sometimes God's answer is "No," or "Not yet," or "I've got a better idea!" I don't know God's will for my 23 year old son who lives in pain most days. I do know it was God's timing that brought us together with the medical team that did his successful brain surgery when he was 15. And the vision of my son that I was granted on Good Friday a year after the surgery, a vision of Chris' face in on the large wooden cross where Jesus' left hand was nailed, reassures me that Chris is in Jesus' care. So my husband Brian and I wait for God to act with hope, and we drive Chris to his neurological appointments in Rochester, grateful that God entrusted us with Chris' care.

No, faith isn't a magic bullet. Faith is what keeps us turning to and trusting in God for help, for comfort, and for strength. We walk by faith, not by sight. Faith as small as a mustard seed is enough for God to work with, but how much richer our lives would be if we always turned to God first! The Canaanite woman believed Jesus could heal her daughter and she wouldn't be silenced until she was heard by Jesus. Be persistent in bringing your prayers before God; believe that God is full of compassion and has your very best interests at heart, and remember that only God has the full picture and knowledge of the future. Amen.

St. Alban's
Lunch at the Olive Garden
Tuesday, August 29 at noon.

Sign up or call Valerie if you are able to come.
Friends are welcome!



Emmanuel

September 9: We will have a parish meeting about our financial situation
at 4:15 p.m. during coffee hour.

September 16: Memorial Service for Thomas Ghent at 11:00 a.m.
Tom is the long time partner of Father Gerry Beritela.
A luncheon follows the service.

Needed: Side Salads, Desserts, Donations toward the purchase of
sandwich trays

September 23: Autumn Treasures Craft & Vendor Sale, 10:00-3:30

Needed: Kitchen workers for meatball subs and bakers for the bake sale

In Person Schedule: Both Parishes & Friends are Welcome!

Saturday	Emmanuel	* 4:15 p.m.: Coffee Hour
	Home	5:00 p.m.: Holy Eucharist
Sunday	St. Alban's	* 8:30 a.m.: Bible Study
		* 9:30 a.m.: Holy Eucharist
		10:30 a.m.: Coffee Hour

* also on Zoom

Zoom Schedule & Codes

Saturday

5:00 p.m. Emmanuel: **812 9701 3112 & 381729**

Sunday

8:30 a.m. Bible Study: **825 2837 9378 & 695433**

9:30 a.m. St. Alban's: **826 9515 6305 & 446765**

Tuesday

10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer: **817 4372 7305 & 891158**

Wednesday

2:00 p.m. Bible Study: **840 0349 8213 & 586548**