

NOT THROWING THE CHILDREN'S FOOD TO THE DOGS

Matthew 15:21–22, 24–26 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just 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." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." [NRSV]

Am I offended by Jesus' answer?

There is no question that Jesus counted the petitioner among the dogs: of no regard, as compared to the children to whom the food belongs. The help she sought was reserved for them and would be wasted on her as on other similar dogs.

Why did Jesus try to offend the poor woman by insulting her so?

It is not productive for me to question the Lord ("why does God?") and thus show my arrogance and ignorance, as God taught Job "from the whirlwind," after Job asked why God had let such terrible evils be inflicted on him:

Job 38:1–4 Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind: ²"Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? ³Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. ⁴Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much." [NLT]

Rather it is fit for me to ask: what may I learn of the Lord from His saying?

First, I may recognize the test of faith: do I accept Him, His will and His words or do I prefer my traditions, my customs and my values and use them to question Him?

Have I accepted and believed Him, because I and my common sense agree with Him or because He is the Son of the Living God — and only because He is the Son of the Living God?

So I have to choose:

Matthew 15:26 He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." [NRSV]

Do I believe Him? Do I dare acknowledge that He knows what He is saying and doing — even if I can't fathom it — just because I believe in Him? Or am I enslaved to my own sense of social etiquette and of proper behavior among educated people?

Do I dare abandon myself to Him because I trust Him and leave my traditions and prejudices aside, as the sons of Zebedee did when Jesus called them:

Matthew 4:20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. [NRSV]

That is the first step. Alright then, I accept and believe; but still: am I offended?

Well, I may be; but it is worth noting that the Canaanite woman was not offended at all, was not alienated, was not cast down nor cast away.

On the contrary, she agreed with Jesus:

Matthew 15:27a She replied, "That's true, Lord," [NLT]

Furthermore, she turned the circumstance into an opportunity to express her faith: first, by acknowledging her unworthiness before God and second, by reaffirming her belief and faith in Who the "master" is and in the power and goodness of God — on behalf not of herself, but of her suffering daughter:

Matthew 15:27 She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table." [NLT]

Immediately, Jesus acknowledged her faith and declared to her and for the learning of all future generations:

Matthew 15:28 "Dear woman," Jesus said to her, "your faith is great. Your request is granted." And her daughter was instantly healed. [NLT]

Who am I then to be offended? Might I not rather recognize that Jesus knew his petitioner very well, perhaps better than I?

Was Job offended by God's not complying with his request, but rather scolding him?

Not at all, rather Job repented:

Job 42:5-6 *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. ⁶Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. [KJV]*

Hence: did God offend Job or did God know what Job needed to hear in order to receive truth?

Again:

Matthew 15:26 *He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." [NRSV]*

Instead of being scandalized or offended, may I learn that what is important for me is to recognize my unworthiness, as of a sinner with no rights before God, but saved by His grace?

Romans 5:8 *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [ESV]*

and yet able to receive His love and forgiveness, because:

John 1:17b *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. [KJV]*

Instead of being scandalized or offended, may I be thankful for the Lord helping me to learn to set aside doctrines and traditions in favor of the simple unreserved and unconditional trust to the uttermost in Him, the Living God?

John 13:13 *"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am." [KJV]*

Is He my Master and Lord, so that this may not be true of me?

Isaiah 29:13 *The Lord says: "These people worship me with their mouths, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is based on nothing but human rules." [EXB]*

but rather that, when He returns, I may be counted among those, who have faith in Him:

Luke 18:8b *"But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?" [NLT]*