

Date: August 16, 2026 (Pentecost 12)

1. Texts: Genesis 45:1-15; Ps. 133; Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15:21-28.
2. Subject: Christology.
3. Topic: Jesus learns he is Lord of and for all.
4. Aim: encourage.
5. Proposition: "Jesus is Lord of and for all."

LORD OF ALL

When preaching about the Canaanite woman, most preachers focus on the woman's faith. "Woman," said Jesus, "great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." The preacher's pious conclusion is that Jesus ultimately rewards people of great faith. All we have to do is believe enough and act upon that belief enough.

But that's not really the issue in this reading from Matthew. The passage is not really about the faith of the woman. It is about Jesus—it's always about Jesus. Sure, it starts with the woman, but the passage ends up telling us something absolutely crucial about Jesus.

Let's be clear: the woman is not a Jew. She is a pagan from Canaan. She has no claim on Jesus' attention. There is no reason that Jesus should listen to her pleas for help. After all, he's a Jewish prophet, sent only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24). He has enough to do with all the Jews let alone adding some pagan to the list.

The woman doesn't argue the point. She knows Jesus is a Jewish Messiah. Instead, she relies upon his compassion. "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."¹

So here's the crucial thing about Jesus that is at the heart of this story. In this interaction with a Gentile woman, Jesus learns that he is the Messiah for all people. He is not only a Jewish Messiah. He is the Messiah for all people.

¹ Matthew 15:27.

It was the same lesson he learned — although not as clearly stated — when he healed the man with the legion of demons. That man was a Greek-speaking man, who also had no claim on Jesus' attention. Jesus was the Messiah for all people and not just for Jews.

And, according to today's story from Matthew, all that is required to gain Jesus' attention was to believe that Jesus is the Messiah for all people. Religious affiliation was not the key to Jesus. Faith is.

This should be good news to all of us.

Our children and grandchildren don't have to be Anglicans to gain the attention of Jesus—or Baptists or Pentecostalists or any other -ist. Denominational allegiance is not the issue. Access to Christ's attention is through faith, by believing that Jesus is the Messiah of and for all.

In the case of Christian faith, to believe is to accept that Jesus is the Lord and Saviour of all and to live according to that belief. Belief is not an intellectual exercise. To believe is to fundamentally reorient one's life according to the truth that Jesus is the Lord of and for all. To believe is to put yourself in a loving and life-changing relationship with Jesus who is everyone's Lord, without regard for denominational allegiance.

In terms of learning more about this relationship with Jesus, it is important to be allied with some group or denomination. Each believer needs the meaningful support of others. Jesus himself intended that his followers exist within a community of love. Believing in Jesus as Lord necessarily places us in relationship with other believers.

But the crucial fact—the starting point for salvation—is that living and life-giving relationship with Jesus. The Canaanite woman, who was not Jewish, discovered this, as did the Greek man possessed by demons. Your children and grandchildren, your friends and neighbours, can discover this.

The burning question in this is how.

Let's start first with ourselves. We have to be sure that we know and believe that Jesus is the Lord of and for all, without regard for denominational allegiance. We have to have that faith that surpasses our understanding, that life-changing relationship with God in Jesus.

We'll be assured of this once we allow that faith to be guiding force behind our words and actions. Faith must be seen and acted upon for it to be genuine. That is, faith is not a philosophy. It is the way we exist. We say, "I believe in one God." And that means something absolutely different from "I believe it will rain." "I believe Jesus is the centre of my being" means something different than "I believe in the democratic process." Essential to such believing is allowing that relationship to be witnessed and experienced by those around us.

It is through such faith-filled living that our children, grandchildren, friends and neighbours can discover Jesus as the starting point of salvation. They witness our life-changing relationship with Jesus. They see us working out our salvation with Jesus—sometimes in "fear and trembling".² They recognize Jesus in what we say and do, both for them and for others.

These witnesses to our faith-filled living can then discover their own access to Jesus as Lord of and for all. Through our words and actions they can stand in the same position as the Canaanite woman and the Gerasene demoniac. Our testimony can guide them in turning to Jesus for help. Jesus learned that he is the Lord of and for all, and we can support others as they try to figure this out.

You see, the story of the Canaanite woman is not really about her faith. It is about Jesus' response to her faith. He learned that he was her Lord, even though she was not Jewish. Jesus' expanded his own identity in response to her faith. That's Jesus' real story.

And may it be our good news story today. AMEN.

² "Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13