

“Overcome Brokenness” Matthew 15:21-28

Introduction: Pg. _____

Jesus was not an impenetrable hero. Sure, those who follow Jesus have from the very beginning believed that this man born in a tiny, little town outside of Jerusalem was and is God, but that does not mean that he managed to walk through life unscathed from the problems and pain of our world. He was not invincible. He was not immune to our suffering. Though he was fully God, he was also fully man.

The danger for those of us who say with Christians throughout the centuries, “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father” is that we can be guilty of elevating his deity to the point of nearly missing or at least neglecting his humanity.

At great cost, the eternal Son of God *became* man. He took on flesh and blood, which means he not only set his unfiltered glory aside but did so to take on our limitations and experience our brokenness. He got hungry, like us. He got tired, like us. He shed tears, like us. But it was more than that. Jesus experienced brokenness in an unparalleled way, because he saw the gap between the way there were supposed to be in God’s world and the way things were, and it crushed him. This is why the Bible describes Jesus with that peculiar phrase, “he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” (Isaiah 53:3)

Jesus entered our brokenness, experienced our brokenness, and came to overcome our brokenness.

Whatever aspect of our broken world you are experiencing today, the hope-filled news of Jesus is that he understands and is working to overcome all of our brokenness.

The question for us as we traverse life’s difficulties is this: Will we believe there is something better on the horizon? Will we believe in Jesus as the Overcomer of our brokenness? That is the encouragement for us today from Matthew 15:21-28.

The Point: Believe in Jesus as the Overcomer of our brokenness.

Read Matthew 15:21-28

I believe this is one of the most fascinating interactions Jesus has with anyone recorded in the Bible.

- He is silent when we’d expect to him to speak.
- He appears cold when we’d expect warmth.
- He appears exclusive when we’d want him to be inclusive.
- And yet... there is more than meets the eye

T: The story’s setting and the key characters provide great insight into the character of Jesus. The first thing we discover is how . . .

I. Jesus overcomes barriers to overcome our brokenness.

Setting

- Verse 21 tells us: “Jesus went away from there (Galilee in Northern Israel) and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon,” ancient cities on the Mediterranean Sea in what is now, modern-day Lebanon.
- They were centers of trade, wealth and power, but they were also known for their false worship of the idol Baal.

The first question we ask is: What is Jesus doing there? **Why did he retreat from Galilee in foreign land?** Let’s have some fun with this. Multiple Choice:

- **A) Opposition.** For starters, opposition against Jesus has been rising. The religious leaders were not on board with his teaching, nor his scandalous actions like healing people on days that were off limits in their mind. (Wow!)
- **B) The Price of Popularity.** But not only was opposition against Jesus rising, so was his popularity. As he continued to perform miracle after miracle, as he taught with such insight and authority, many of the people wanted to make him King (cf. John 12). For those of you that know the price of fame, Jesus feels your pain! :)
- **C) Rest and Refreshment.** We can also safely assume that retreated to land outside of Israel for rest. In this same account as told by another biographer of Jesus whose name was Mark, he tells us that Jesus and his disciples were actually in someone’s home “and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden.”
- **D) All of the above.**

T: We not only ask what is he doing there, but why is he entertaining this request from this peculiar character? Verse 22...

- “And behold” (This Matthew’s characteristic way of grabbing our attention. Something extraordinary is on the horizon) “a Canaanite”
- Stop right there. Canaanites and Israelites were not allies. Historically, they were enemies. Jesus is breaking social and nationalistic barriers.
- And they were enemies, primarily because of their difference in religious allegiance. Jesus is breaking through religious barriers. But that’s not all.
- “And behold, a Canaanite *woman* from that region.” Women did not have the same social standing in our day (not that we’ve totally arrived in that area, but rewind a couple millennia and life was very different). Jesus is breaking cultural and gender barriers.

T: This is the consistent picture we have of Jesus. His love broke barriers. Whether you are a follower of Jesus or would not yet consider yourself a Christian, I assume that you find this attractive?

Jesus was her hope for healing but healing would not come easy. This leads us to the second dynamic I want us to see in this story: Not only does Jesus overcome barriers...

II. Jesus overcomes our unbelief.

This woman is broken with grief over the brokenness of her daughter, but in the midst of her brokenness she displays an unshakable belief that Jesus can heal and overcome. She provides an astounding picture of “great faith.” As we walk through her story of persevering faith, I want to ask you two questions:

- 1) What brokenness around you breaks your heart?**
- 2) Will you break through the apparent barriers with belief?**

Apparent Barrier #1: Social barriers. We already highlighted these.

In her distress, she CRIED out, and kept on crying out . . . “Have mercy on me.” (4x)

- The situation was urgent. Her daughter was not out playing with other kids but isolated, hurting, and wrapped in fear.
- She requests “mercy,” undeserved kindness, and she does so with intensity, because her plight is linked to the plight of her daughter (have mercy on me - not her).

Apparent Barrier #2: Jesus’ silence. Verse 23: “But he did not answer her a word.”

- What? Jesus typically responded quickly and favorably to needs around him. What is going on?
- In a moment of pain, have you ever felt like God was silent? Many people assume that God, if he exists, is a silent God. He wouldn’t really care about my situation.
- AS: But this is what separates Christianity from other religions of the world. We do not worship an impersonal deity, detached from our lives, but one who desires to relate to us a Father AND in Jesus, has stepped into our brokenness.
- When you assume God is silent, just wait. His silence may be deliberate. He may be working to build us up in ways we cannot see.

The woman...

- Continued crying out, so much so that the disciples beg Jesus to take care of her and send her away.
- And Jesus breaks the silence with a surprising statement.
- Verse 24: “He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
- Apparent...

Apparent Barrier #3: Jesus’ statement of mission.

- Jesus says the priority of his mission was Israel, not the people who live out here.
- But we can view these words as harsh and cold or we can view them as a test. The latter is more plausible. Surely, Jesus sensed the sincerity of this woman’s faith and he wanted to draw it out.
 - After all, the plan was always God’s his salvation to flow from Israel to the world.
 - Matthew understood this and wrote his gospel to a Jewish audience and explains with clear intention how Jesus came, not just the lost sheep of Israel, but all of the lost sheep of the world.
 - In Matthew 1, Jesus is presented as “the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Why does that matter? God promised in the beginning that it was through Abraham, every people group on earth would be blessed. And in Matthew 28, Jesus tells his disciples to “Go make disciples of all nations.”
 - There is no deviation from that plan. This encounter in chapter 15 serves to show that God’s salvation will extend beyond Israel to the world.
- Surely Jesus is testing her. . .

T: In spite of Jesus saying this, she heightens her appeal. “BUT she came.”

25 But she came and knelt before him [in a posture of humility and complete dependence], saying, “Lord, help me.”

[I don’t know about you, but I think she has him at this point. Surely, Jesus will acquiesce to her request, but look at his shocking answer in verse 26: “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Apparent Barrier #4: Jesus analogy to explain his mission.

- Whoa. Is Jesus being condescending? rude?
- Though this sounds harsh, we should acknowledge we only have the transcript of the conversation. We are missing the tone.
 - How many times have you misread a text message and jumped to wrong conclusions because you couldn’t hear their tone of voice.
 - Again, drawing out her faith in a way (and I love this!) that will be displayed for all to see.
- In his analogy, Jesus gives the picture of a family sitting around a table. (This is still a good idea by the way! Sit down and enjoy meals together.)
- For those of you who have a dog, you know exactly how this works.
 - Dogs love to beg for food, and if they have the opportunity to snag a bite under the table or just a few crumbs, they will happily do so.
 - And the logic is simple and irrefutable. Though some of you treat your dogs like a child, you would never starve your child to feed your dog.
- Again, he emphasizes the priority of his mission. Children represent Israel. Dogs represent Gentiles or Non-Jews, and the bread represents the benefits of God for his people/family.

T: Though she could have walked home dejected, what she says next is truly remarkable.

She doesn’t try to manipulate Jesus (if you’re really powerful). She is not demanding. She doesn’t present a counterargument. She actually agrees with his statement, but takes it a step further.

27 “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.”

- The whole narrative is pushing to this “majestic note.” (Morris)
- I’ll take the crumbs, because even a little of your power will be more than I need.
- She possesses “tenacious faith.”

What request have you given to God that you are tempted to give up on? Don’t give up. Like this woman, press on. *Belief sees beyond the barriers.*

**On the one hand, it appears she has an overcoming faith. At one level, that is true. But as we dig deeper, we discover Jesus was the source of our overcoming her unbelief and despair. What she saw in Jesus compelled belief. That’s how faith works. We see our lack of power, which moves us beyond ourselves to the power of another. She believed his salvation was big enough for her situation. She believed...

III. Jesus overcomes our brokenness.

28 Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, [he answers her with emotion. He’s taken back and says,] great is your faith! [And he moves to answer her cry for mercy!] Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

- Pause for a minute and consider P
- What if God wants to use your brokenness to lead you to him?
- **J.C. Ryle** once said: **“Health is a good thing; but sickness is far better, if it leads us to God.”**
- What’s your situation? Where are you experiencing brokenness?
 - Like this woman, are you concerned for the future of your children? Like this woman, are you concerned for the mental, emotional, or physical health of someone you love? Perhaps you are broken over the injustice around you or challenges in relationships or your workplace.
 - Whatever the situation, Jesus is able to walk with you to overcome the brokenness.
- Now, we need to be careful here. I’m not promising you immediate or ultimate healing in this life.
- “The quickest way to discontentment is to hold God hostage to promises he never made.” - John O.
- I’m not promising you healing in this life, but I am promising you Jesus is the Healer.

This is what this Canaanite (Syrophonecian) woman believed. She wasn’t looking to another way out of her brokenness. (3 circles?) She looked to Christ.

She saw Jesus as the Deliverer. The one who could restore our plight and heal our brokenness.

- In verse 22, she not only calls him “Lord,” which at minimum, was a great title of respect, but she seems to say much more calling him the “Son of David.”
- This meant only one thing in and around Israel. It referred to the anticipated Messiah, the new King who one who would bring deliverance and restoration for the people.
- But Jesus defied expectation. While the people expected a great warrior like David, who would overthrow Rome and setup an earthly kingdom, Jesus brought something much greater.
- He came to bring about the restoration of all things, a restoration that was launched with his first coming, but will be fully realized when he comes again.
- This restoration will bring comprehensive physical healing and wholeness, like we begin to see in the healing of the woman’s daughter and much, much more as we’ll see next week, but also spiritual healing and wholeness.
 - Let’s not forget that important phrase in verse 24: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
 - This phrase should not be understood as “lost sheep *among* Israel” as if some are good and some are not good, but as “the lost sheep *who are* the house of Israel” because all need God’s rescue, all are lost apart from his grace.
 - Jesus came to deliver all, because all need his deliverance.
 - Sheep are metaphorical for those who are helpless and in need of a leader. Sheep are not smart animals. They often wandered off from the rest of the flock.
 - **“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)**

And in this passage, we begin to see that not only does our broken world need healing, but our broken hearts need healing as well.

Conclusion:

How does Jesus accomplish this healing? His victory happened in the moment of near defeat when he was crucified on a Roman cross.

- **“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)**

Jesus overcomes our brokenness by being broken for us.

We are going to sing a classic song with a slight twist. Amazing grace is a song that Christians have been singing for hundreds of years. All of the healing we receive from Jesus is a gift of his grace and we should be amazed that he would live and die and rise from the dead in our place. But now we can also sing together, “my chains are gone, I’ve been set free, My God, My Savior, has ransomed me, and like a flood his mercy reigns, unending love, amazing grace.”

Bring your brokenness to the Overcomer of our brokenness as we sing together.