In God We Trust - Part 4

# Independence Day

## (Matthew 15:21-28)

Welcome to all of you on this Fourth of July weekend as we are celebrating our freedom in Christ with part 4 of our message series, In God We Trust. We’re going to wrap it up today with a message entitled Independence Day. This is the conclusion of the series and I wonder how many of you have been encouraged, you have learned something, your faith is increasing, and you are trusting God more than ever? My prayer is that this has been time well invested because next week we’re going to take it up another level, kicking off a brand-new message series entitled Five Smooth Stones. And so, we’re going to be looking at the story of David and Goliath which is a well-known story of God’s ability to deliver his people in spite of the way it looks. And so, we’re going to learn about the enemy before us, but recognizing ultimately that our God is so much bigger.

Now, last week, we saw a weak moment in the life of Moses as he reacted in front of the people of God with anger and frustration. And so, he misrepresented God, dishonored an illustration, the symbol of Christ in the rock, and therefore forfeited the privilege of leading Israel into the Promised Land. This was a traumatic moment for Moses, so disappointing, because he was so close to fulfilling his dream. And many of you know that when you get close to seeing your dream realized, tensions increase, and things can get really difficult. And so, God brought Moses to the top of Mount Nebo where he was able to see the Jordan River, he could see the promise on the other side, but in spite of being so close he was not allowed to cross over into the Promised Land.

Today, I want to talk to those of you who feel rejected, maybe it was something you did, something you could’ve done better, or maybe it wasn’t even your fault that all, and it was what someone else did. Maybe you were abandoned and deep down inside you often hear this nagging voice telling you that you’re a failure, you’re not good enough, or you don’t measure up. Maybe you were rejected, you’ve been hurt, and you feel unworthy of love and acceptance.

Well, this message is entitled, Independence Day, and we’re going to close the door to those negative thoughts, voices, and feelings. I am praying and believing that many of you are going to be set free because you’re going to discover who you are in Christ, and others of you are going to be encouraged as you rehearse who you are in Christ. And so, if you have your Bible with you today, would you turn to Matthew chapter 15, verse 21. We’re going to read verses 21-28 and we want to hear from God this morning, because faith comes from what? Hearing the word of God, right?

In other words, it’s not just a book, because in the beginning there was no Bible, but the apostle John tells us,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:1-2).

And so, the Word of God is more than just text, more than just letters on a page, because man doesn’t live on bread alone,

“…but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

And just as Jesus is the Living Word, as I share the word of God with you through this text, there is what is called a Rhema word, a spoken word, an utterance, through which the Holy Spirit will speak into your life and allow you to see how the Word applies to your life personally. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he said,

“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

And so, as we come to the text in Matthew chapter 15, read along with me, listening carefully, because the Spirit of God will speak, and you want to allow every word of the text to become Rhema to you. And so, let’s read together as the Holy Spirit teaches us through the pen of Matthew in verse 21,

“Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession" (Matthew 15:21-22).

“Jesus did not answer a word. So, his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us” (Matthew 15:23).

“He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

“The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs” (Matthew 15:25-26).

“Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table” (Matthew 15:27).

“Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour” (Matthew 15:28).

In this text, you and I, together with the disciples learn that God has a way of going beyond what we’ve been taught, and beyond our traditions, because his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8). And so, God will break the rules to accomplish whatever he is trying to accomplish in our lives.

I want you to notice that even though this woman is not Jewish, she finds herself at a point in her life where she was desperate enough to cross the line, breaking free from her traditions. And it’s in that context, that we are introduced to this Canaanite woman, she is not a Jew or a Christian, but a pagan idolatrous mother who had run out of options. In other words, none of her idols or pagan deities had been able to relieve the suffering of her daughter and so in desperation she broke past her traditions, seeking deliverance from a God that she has never met.

Now, she had heard people talking about Jesus’ ability to heal and perform miracles. She’d heard people discussing whether or not this man, Jesus of Nazareth, was Israel’s Messiah, but it was in the same way that we learn about or interact with people of other religions. In other words, we go to school with them, we work with them, and we live across the street from them, but it is their faith tradition and not ours. And so, throughout the centuries, there had been a lot of history between her people, her ancestors, and Israel, but involvement doesn’t require integration. Her people had a knowledge of the Lord God Jehovah, but they never turned to God from their idols to serve the living and true God… neither in the past nor in the days of Jesus did her people ever worship him who rescues us from the coming wrath” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

And so, this “Canaanite woman from that vicinity” was one of the last people you would expect to see fighting through the crowd of disciples to get an audience with Jesus, but she “came to him crying out”,

“Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession” (Matthew 15:22).

She was calling on God just like we do when we want him to get us out of the trouble, we got ourselves into, but she wasn’t familiar with him. She didn’t have a relationship with him, and so she was coming to Jesus like some of those “friends” that only call you when they need something.

Nowadays, most of us have caller ID, and so when the phone rings you can look down and see who’s calling, right? Well, she called but, “Jesus did not answer a word” (Matthew 15:23). Now, I’m just trying to be real, because we all have people that only call you when they want something. You know, they don’t call you on your birthday or Christmas, but the moment they want something, suddenly it’s like, “Brother, you’ve been on my mind”. In other words, you’re like a spare tire, because the last time they used you, the last time they thought about you, was when they were in trouble, but then they threw you in the back of the car until the next time they’re in trouble.

You see, we only want people when we want them, and then we expect them to drop everything to help us, because we want our emergency to become their emergency. Jesus didn’t even answer her, but I want you to notice what his disciples did. They came to Jesus and urged him,

“Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us” (Matthew 15:23).

Now, I don’t know about you, but I think that’s kind of funny, because this woman didn’t say anything about them. They said, “She keeps crying out after us,” but she didn’t say anything about Peter, Andrew, James, or John. She said, “Lord, Son of David” (Matthew 15:22).

And maybe you’ve noticed how some people feel important because they’re around somebody important? You know, I’m sure that you all have seen it, but they post a picture on Facebook or Instagram with “so-and-so”, more important than me, more famous than me, but everybody look at me.

I want you to notice there was a reason for Jesus’ silence, he didn’t answer because he said, “I didn’t come for her.

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

In other words, he knew that she was an idolatrous woman, he knew that she hadn’t been seeking him, and so he wasn’t chasing after her. He didn’t answer her because her past history contradicted her present emergency.

But she was a desperate woman with a desperate situation, and so she came looking for Jesus, looking for answers, looking for truth, because she discovered that the devil only offers cheap substitutes. He offers freedom, but it only leads to slavery. He will offer you the kingdoms of the world, but he can’t deliver. And so, she’d been chasing after her ancestors’ idols, pagan deities, and cheap thrills, but it was all a dead end. She’d gone to the soothsayer and witch doctor, but she still found herself on the street with her daughter wrestling with a demon and struggling with suicidal feelings.

You see, everybody doesn’t come to Jesus because they love him, everybody isn’t in church because they love going to church. Some of you are here because you got caught messing around, you were doing something you weren’t supposed to do and you got in trouble. You see, it doesn’t matter who you are, but when the devil gets through with you, you’re going to call on the name of the Lord. This woman came and knelt before Jesus, crying out, “Lord, help me” (Matthew 15:25). And there are some of you here today because you discovered that the devil couldn’t deliver on his promise of freedom and it brought you to your knees.

I want to talk to some real people this morning, not those of you who act like you’ve got it all together, those of you who have never been unfaithful, never messed around, never did anything wrong; but those of you that came looking for Jesus when the waves got too high, the storm was blowing too hard, and life got tough. I want to talk to some people that were pushed to Jesus, blown to Jesus, driven to Jesus; you didn’t come to church because you were a nice person, you came because you were desperate.

You came to church, because you need a miracle, you need a touch from God. But what do you do when the thief is breaking in your door and the police don’t answer the phone? What do you do when you call on Jesus because your daughter is demon possessed and he kept on walking? What do you do when you called upon the name above every name and he acted like he was deaf? What do you do when God doesn’t answer?

Well, watch what the Canaanite woman did, she drew closer, and she got down on her knees at his feet. You see, sometimes God doesn’t answer until you draw closer, sometimes he doesn’t respond until you humble yourself, and so she knelt before Jesus and said, "Lord, help me!” (Matthew 15:25). In other words, she broke all the rules, she wasn’t worried about being politically correct because she was fighting with a devil. She was tired of seeing her daughter suffering with this demon, and so she cried out, “I need some help, Lord!”

She put Jesus in a dilemma, and I want you to notice his response. He’s in a quandary and he replies almost as if he wasn’t talking to her. He’s like, this is not the way it’s supposed to happen, this is not my assignment, this is not what my Father told me to do, he told me to come to my own, and right now I’m still dealing with my own.

“It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs” (Matthew 15:26).

I know you you’ve got a problem with your daughter, but I’m dealing with my children too. I know you’ve got a problem, but I’m trying to feed my children, trying to get them to eat, and they won’t eat. You’re here telling me about your daughter and my children are in trouble too. I’m trying to get them to eat because I am the bread of life, but they won’t come to me, they won’t believe, they refuse to come to me to have life (John 5:40).

And then the woman blew his mind, with genuine humility she said, “Yes, Lord. I am dog.” She humbled herself before him and said,

"Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table" (Matthew 15:27).

In other words, she said, “Yes, Lord, that’s me, I’m a Gentile, I’m an idolater, I admit my daughter and I are dogs. We are…

“Excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

She says, “Yes, that’s me, but I’ll be happy to eat the crumbs, I’ll settle for what your children waste, and with that reply she broke Jesus.

Her inability to be insulted broke him, her meekness broke him, because she didn’t even argue with him. She wasn’t prideful or arrogant, she simply said, “That’s true, I am a dog, I am a Gentile, I am outside of Israel, outside of the covenant. That is true, but I am desperate. I know I’ve messed up, but I’m desperate. Can I have some crumbs? All I need is some crumbs, my daughter could get healed from the crumbs, she could be set free from what your children waste, just leave the bread on the table. Lord, feed your children, and I’ll catch the crumbs.”

Jesus said to her, “Woman you have great faith” (Matthew 15:28).

Not her feelings, not her emotions, not her intellect, but her faith. He said, “I can’t deny your faith, you have such great faith that I’m able to do what you’ve asked, “Your request is granted” (Matthew 15:28).

I love that because God doesn’t give her a theological test before he gives her his blessing. In other words, he doesn’t reserve miracles for Israel, he doesn’t reserve miracles for Pentecostals, but he helps people that don’t always help him. He helps people from different nations, different races, different ideas, different traditions, because he said,

“Whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37).

In fact, there are some of you here and God has seen your faith, he has seen your relentless pursuit of him, and your refusal to let anybody run you out of church or keep you from coming to catch some crumbs. He has seen your persistence and he wants to minister to you, he wants to set you free.

The Bible says, at that same hour, not later, not when she got back home, not when she prayed in tongues, not when she laid hands on her daughter, but

“Her daughter was healed from that very hour” (Matthew 15:28).

That very same hour her daughter was set free, she was made whole, and there are some of you who have been praying to be set free from feelings of rejection. Set free from feelings of self-degradation, feeling like a failure, feeling like you don’t fit in, feeling like you not good enough, feeling like you’ll never live up to the expectations of others, feeling like you’ll never be good enough, and today is your Independence Day.

And so, what we want to do today is close the door to all those negative words and feelings, and we want to open the door of truth. We want to eat the crumbs that fall from the master table, because the truth is you’re not what others say that you are, you’re not even what you think about yourself, but you are who Christ says you are. And so, as we close, I want to share three truths with you about who you are in Christ.

The first truth you need to understand is that you are forgiven. The Bible says,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

And so, if you are in Christ, you are forgiven. The old is gone, the old life, the old sin, it’s all gone, it’s as if it never happened. Because in God’s eyes you are a brand-new creation and the Bible says,

“(He) will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19, ESV).

The old has gone and the new has come, but the problem for many people is that even though Christ has forgiven you, you have not forgiven yourself. And so, you need to understand and believe if you are in Christ, you are forgiven.

The second nugget of truth is the fact that in Christ, you are secure. You can be confident, because the Bible says,

“It is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

And so, whenever you are feeling insecure, whenever you are hearing those negative voices, you need to remember that you are secure. Because if you are in Christ, he has put his Spirit in your heart as a deposit guaranteeing what is the come. And so, you are secure, not because of who you are, but because of whose you are.

He has set his seal of ownership on you and therefore you have complete access to the throne room of God, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And so, you are an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb and by the words of your testimony. You can stand firm in Christ, because greater is the one who lives in you than the one who lives in the world. And so, in Christ you are forgiven, in Christ you are secure, and then the third truth is this: in Christ you are absolutely and completely free.

It’s not because of who you are, not because of what you’re feeling, but because of whose you are, because of who you know, and because of what God thinks about you. And so, you believe who God says you are, you are in Christ, and the Bible says,

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

And so, when Jesus sets you free, it’s your Independence Day. You are free from the past, free from the hurt, free from the feelings, free from the voices that haunted you, free from the addictions that once held you, and you’re free to be everything that Jesus created you to be.

Some of you may have come to church or logged in online today feeling like a dog, feeling rejected because of your past, separated from the covenant of promise, but today you’re going to put our trust in God and together we’re going to close the doors to those words that are not true. We are going to slam the door shut, because in Christ you’re forgiven, you’re secure, and if the son sets you free, you are free indeed.

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