



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Everyone has probably heard the phrase, “Keep the change” at one time or another. Many of us most likely have spoken those words. But if we do have change at the end of the day, we put it in a jar or dish. Just a few months ago we used to collect loose change during worship for Luther Park, but now it has become one of our local charities that we support out of our regular local benevolence.

Speaking of being benevolent, Rodney and I used to give Frank and Leigh money when they needed it for an event or outing when they were in high school, since we did not allow them to work. Well, my crafty son would not only be happy to keep the change when he got home from the movies, but he would also ask both Rodney and I for a few bucks to go out. After some time, Rodney and I finally caught on and figured out that he was hitting us both up for cash, so we were not as likely to say, “Keep the change”. He was rather thrifty, like his mother, so we didn’t really mind him having some extra cash. When we cleaned out his bedroom before he went away to college, we found over \$1000 hidden in different drawers and spots in his room.

Some days I think that phrase should be my mantra. I actually love change and I certainly love to “keep the change” if in fact it is good change and not just change for changes sake. I do think that life is not static and should rather, be dynamic. We should all welcome change in our lives as it means we are growing, learning, and hopefully becoming more like Jesus.

In all actuality, Christianity has been a religion of change and of adaption for centuries. Worship in Tunisia is different than in Tanzania, different than in Turkey and even different than in Texas. Christianity has the ability to adapt to new cultures and consider different traditions.

God is in the change business. He loves and accepts us where we are at and gives us room to change into the people, He knows we can become. He yearns for us to have an abundant life and be more like his son, Jesus. Remembering one of the commandments, we hear that

we should have no other gods before us. That tells me that the Israelites that were given these commandments, brought down the mountain by Moses, had other gods that were being worshipped. God wanted the Israelites to make the change and worship only Him, the one true God.

Think with me for a minute what Jesus gave up coming to earth as the Father's only Son to save humanity. He had to make a change and give us his godliness to become the Savior of the World, to be truly human. He was born as a human baby. It says in Philippians 2 that he lowered himself to become human. Scripture also tells us that he grew in physical stature. He matured emotionally and as he aged; he had greater spiritual awareness. I believe that Jesus continued to grow and change throughout his life on earth. Our text for today is an example of how one woman, a Canaanite outwitted Jesus and got him to change his mind. After she bugged Jesus enough, he changed his mind. And then Jesus "Kept the change"! This is the only time in Scripture that I believe we see this happen. And it was a good thing. By doing this Jesus showed us that his Kingdom is really for all people and his focus should be on everyone not just the Israelites, God's chosen people.

Let's look at what I mean by that for a few minutes, so back to our story. Jesus leaves the crowds after he tells them that it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles, not what you eat. Of course, we realize that this goes against Jewish tradition. And so, he moves on and interestingly, ends up in the pagan land of Tyre and Sidon. Soon after he arrives a Canaanite woman who lives there comes to Jesus and starts yelling at him.

Remember that the Canaanites were the descendants of Ham, one of the three sons of Noah. He was the son that saw his father naked in a drunken stoper. According to the rules of the time that view made all of Ham's descendants cursed and destined for slavery. So not only was this woman a Canaanite, strike one, but she was a woman, strike two. Women were not allowed by law to speak to a man in public unless it was her husband. Not only is she a Canaanite, a woman but a brazen one to boot, strike three. No wonder the disciples and Jesus want her gone. So, Jesus ignores her request for him to heal her daughter of a demon.

But as we inspect the words she uses; we do find that she is theologically correct. She first calls out to Jesus using the title, "Lord". That is the title given to Jesus by all true believers. She then goes on to call him the "Son of David". Somehow, she knows some history about Jesus and where he came from. Yet, even with these correct titles, Jesus ignores her. Now I don't know about you but to be ignored is worse than getting an automatic "No".

Jesus is probably surprised by her boldness and might even need a minute to think about how to handle this situation. The disciples have made up their mind as they just say to send her away, to get rid of her embarrassing presence. They don't want any issues with this disgusting woman. Some people have surmised that Jesus was just testing this woman to see if she is truly faithful, a believer. It seems that all of history is waiting to see what Jesus will do. Jesus was sent to earth on a mission to convert all the Israelites. His time on earth was short and his mission to the Israelites massive, so does he have time for the Gentiles. Personally, I think that this was a very teachable moment for Jesus. God rewards faith wherever it is found and even though now might not be the right time to expand his mission to all people, it is here. This opportunity to respond to this Canaanite woman is

here and Jesus can do no less than to demonstrate his compassion on this woman's request for her daughter. What a peek into the coming of the New Covenant, The clear lines between Israelites and everyone else, were about to get broken down.

Jesus is the embodiment of the new covenant. Yet, he was preaching to the Israelites. Many of whom were still faithful to the old covenant. They felt that they were only good enough to have a relationship with God if they lived by all the rules and regulations the religious leaders continually reminded them of. They felt that they were unlovable by God if they did not adhere to the regulations governing just about everything they did. Jesus' mission was to change this old thinking and show them a better way to live life in the New Creation.

What was Jesus thinking when at first, he ignored the Canaanite woman's request? Was he thinking as a human about all those rules that would prohibit a woman from talking to a man. Or was it just too soon to make the shift to the New Covenant that would be shown by addressing this woman's request. I guess it is not for us to know why Jesus did what he did with this woman. But why he did what he did does not change the outcome of the story.

Jesus hears and answers her prayer. Her faith, her audacity and persistence are rewarded. Her daughter is healed of her demon. Jesus has now opened the door to salvation a bit wider. It was a change that will continue to grow well into the future. A change that we should keep.

Scripture continues to show us that the faith of this woman is part of a continuum of converted outsiders and outcasts. The lepers, the woman in adultery, the Samaritan, the Roman centurion and many more as documented by Matthew, the despised collector of taxes, all show that Jesus is the new way of life, a life greater than they could imagine.

This story reminds me why I love Matthew's Gospel so much. He shows clearly, the power of prayer and the value of women. It is a Good News story about the love of God that is available for the asking. Clearly, every one that cries out to God from every race, every sexual orientation, every age, every saint, and every sinner will be heard. This is a great story where we should say "Keep the change".

Our Canaanite woman cried out, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David." She knew the divinity of God incarnate, Jesus. The whole human race depends on God's gracious gifts of forgiveness, abundant and eternal life. And our loving God from this teaching moment on, invites you and me and all his children to call out to him. Anytime anywhere in anyway, callout. Just like our son Frank did, "keep the change" and it will multiply for you as Jesus will always listen and He will always answer.

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