

Matthew 15:10-28

True faith

1. Vv. 10-14. Jesus responds to the Pharisees - the crowd.

a. Vv. 10- 11. Jesus uses the occasion to give some teaching to the crowds. The full implications of this teaching needed further explanation (v. 15ff). Jesus is rejecting the continual application of the elaborate ceremonial purification of the OT and of later Judaism – meaning the end of the ceremonial practices separating Jew and Gentile (see vv. 1-9; discussion with the Pharisees). The implications of Jesus' teaching took time to be fully accepted in the early church (Acts 10, see Paul's strategy Rm. 1:16).

b. Vv. 12-14. Israel is described in the OT as God's plant (Is. 60:21; 61:3). The implications of Jesus' teaching are that, not only are the Pharisees not the leaders of God's people, but they are not God's true people! (see Mt. 3:7-12).

2. Vv. 15-20. Jesus responds to his disciples - 'parable'.

Jesus seems surprised at the disciples' failure to understand. What comes 'from the heart' means from the person's true character. Mark's addition 'thus he declared all foods clean' (Mk. 7:19) is left implied in Matthew.

3. Vv. 21 – 28. Jesus responds to the Canaanite woman.

Compared with Mk.'s account, Mt. compresses the story but expands the dialogue (as in 8:5-13). Mt. emphasises the response of Jesus to the faith of a Gentile. **Unlike the Pharisees and in contrast to the confusion of the disciples, the Gentile woman strikingly addresses Jesus as 'Son of David'** and asks for healing for her daughter. Jesus initially makes no response (23). In response to his disciples Jesus says he was only sent to the 'lost sheep of Israel'. In response to the woman's direct request (25) Jesus quotes a Jewish proverb which likens Gentiles to 'dogs' (26). The harshness of the proverb is probably softened by Jesus' tone, as the woman responds by seemingly playing her part as a Gentile 'dog'! (27). **Jesus commends her faith** (see also 8:10) **and heals her daughter.** The Canaanite woman foreshadows the time when the true Israel will transcend the boundaries of culture and nationality (see 28:18-20).

Reflection/Response. How does our trust in Jesus show our gratitude for being included in God's people? How do we as a church welcome God's people from all different backgrounds into His family? Reflect on Mt. 8:5-13; Acts 10; Heb. 8-9.