**Even the Dogs Eat 2017 08 20**

**Matthew 15:21-28 Pr. H. Adachi**

May the Grace and Peace from the Lord, our Savior, be poured into your hearts!

There was another clash between white supremacist group and the other side in Charlottesville in Virginia. The incident happened on Saturday, August 12th. Then during last week, we heard many on the news how President Trump commented about it and also heard others express different thoughts.

Today’s Gospel of Matthew makes us think how God relates to people whose backgrounds are different, and also how we, who gather at church in the name of Christ, may deal with not only racial matters but also with conflicts that come from different opinions.

While you were listening to the Gospel today, what did you think about the words Jesus’ disciples expressed? What do you think about the words that Jesus said to the woman at first? Let’s reflect on what we heard from today’s Gospel.

The gentile mother, whose daughter was severely sick, probably heard about Jesus’ strong healing power somewhere and came to where Jesus and his disciples were near Galilee shouting “Have mercy on me, Lord!” Then, weren’t you surprised by what the disciples said, although Jesus said nothing at first?

They asked Jesus, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” If it was today, it could be perceived that the disciples were racists. Then Jesus’ response was not scolding the disciples, but something like going along with what the disciples were saying.

I think we should be careful not to criticize disciples and Jesus from the viewpoint of our 21st century context.  We need to think what was the norm in Jewish society 2000 years ago.

The words Jesus said to the women at first were “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” However, the women followed him and said “Help me, Lord!” Then Jesus said, “It is not fair to take the children’s food, the food for Jews, and throw it to the dogs, gentiles.” In today’s context, we cannot believe what Jesus said.

In today’s world, we have social tendencies to condemn racism, however, it was very different among ancient Jews, “Jews were chosen people.” Therefore I say, Jesus, who as a Jew, went along with his disciples; it made sense.

As evidence, in response to what Jesus said, that we might think is terrible, the woman did not show any uncomfortable feelings, but humbly said, “Yes, Lord.” Then surprisingly for us, she responded, “yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

What a faithful attitude she expressed what was within her humble heart!  Even among the disciples, they showed doubt (the famous one was Peter as many of you know), this woman accepted that Jesus referred to her as a little dog, and trusted Jesus as her Lord without any doubt. She threw her faith in Jesus to him directly.

Then Jesus’ attitude was completely changed by her faith. He mentioned that her faith was great and healed the

daughter. Although Jesus was behaving as a Jew who was not very different from his other Jewish disciples; we then see that Jesus was different from other the disciples and that he showed his mercy to the gentile mother and daughter.

Jesus was born in Israel and he was living together with Jews. However his true nature, his essence, was very different from the common beliefs that normal Jews had at that time. He went across the border between Jews and gentiles through faith. Also in this story, we realize that people who believed in Jesus was not only Jews but also gentiles.

In the Bible, we heard about the Samaritan woman (a gentile) who met with Jesus at the well and confessed that Jesus must be the savior mentioned in John, Chapter 4.  Also after Jesus’ death and resurrection, we know that there was the Egyptian eunuch (a gentile) who expressed his faith in Jesus.

For Gentiles too, the mercy of God was poured abundantly and Christian church, which was a reformed version of Judaism, started. In Acts, there was a story that the first generation disciples had a meeting in Jerusalem and concluded that Gentiles were also saved.

You might think that because of the outcome of the meeting, the Christian church was changed to proclaim the Gospel to gentiles. However the reality was among Gentiles, great faithful people in Christ were born and became leaders of Christian church, or we can say Jewish customs were changed.  In today’s story, the faith of the Canaanite woman had power to initiate changes of  the perception or to destroy prejudices that first generation disciples had, in the long run.

We should remember that faith still has the power to change society even now. Even though, we saw the clash in Charlottesville and we see repeated racial discrimination in the world, change in this world is still progressing and faith in Christ is a very important part of the progress.  I pray that the 2 billion Christians in the world can learn from the Canaanite woman, and are able to trust Jesus as the Lord, our savior, and serve the world so it’s positively changed according to the will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.