

Matthew 15:21-28 – An Embarrassment of Riches

I don't think there is a family that does not have an uncle or grandpa or father who does not delight in embarrassing his kids. My uncle Frank found enjoyment in embarrassing me, especially when I was on his farm. Have you ever been embarrassed by the words or actions of a friend or family member? Sometimes it is the truth that upsets us – the truth that everyone knows but no one says.

Have you ever been embarrassed by the Bible? Ever read something shocking to you that you wish God had not said? Have you ever been embarrassed by Jesus? Statistics tell us that one of the reasons people give for not inviting people to their church is the fear of being embarrassed by their church or their pastor. Have you ever been embarrassed in that way?

Today we find the disciples embarrassed. They were embarrassed by this pest of a woman from the wrong side of the tracks who refused to shut up and leave them alone. They were also embarrassed that Jesus did not seem to be bothered by this woman. And they were embarrassed that Jesus did not do something about her and send her packing.

They were even more embarrassed when the Lord stopped to listen to her, engaged her in conversation, and then gave to her grace they thought should have gone to more deserving people. Jesus listened to her. She was not a follower of Jesus. She was a woman with a past. She was a pest. She was bothering the Lord with her concern for her daughter. This was embarrassing to them. Why didn't she just go away or Jesus send her away? Even when Jesus insulted her, she did not deny it. She was a dog, all right.

But Jesus then gave her what she asked for – more than crumbs and a shocking display of mercy. Jesus not only listened to her and talked with her but gave to her daughter the healing for which this woman had begged. How embarrassing. Jesus should have known better. This woman was a dog and she did not deserve His kindness. Yes, sometimes kindness embarrasses us. Grace embarrasses us.

Jesus transcended right and merit and worth to display the nature of God's love and His kingdom and to give to her the grace she did not deserve and show her the mercy that was His gift. It was an embarrassment of riches toward someone who did not deserve any bit of it.

You worry about being embarrassed. But you are the embarrassment. You are sinners. Not just little sinners like the person who sticks a toe in to test the waters. Nope. You have jumped in headfirst to every kind of filth, evil, shameful, and scandalous sin. You are an embarrassment to the Lord. You have nothing to stand on and your only appeal is the same as this woman's – grace, pure grace, and grace alone.

That is the gift of God. God does not give His mercy to those who think they deserve it. God does not reserve His grace for those who are holy or righteous or good. God gives His grace to dogs. He does so every Sunday. We deserve nothing of His kindness and yet He is kind to us. He forgives our terrible sins for the sake of Jesus Christ and counts us as His own righteous and holy children by baptism.

Every Sunday we come and receive an embarrassment of riches from the Lord. None of us gets what we deserve from Him – thanks be to God – and each of us receives what none of us deserves. Grace upon grace. Mercies new every morning. Forgiveness for the dirty and shameful sins we commit. The clothing of righteousness to cover our evil. The flesh and blood of Christ as our true and glorious food of everlasting life. The privilege of serving Him who served us by dying on the cross.

You and I worry about what others will think of us but we do not fear God. We act like we deserve what He gives to us. We presume the right to be here in His presence. We are an embarrassment to the Lord and still He forgives us and calls us His own. Every week we face this same embarrassment of riches – more than we deserve or dare ask. It is grace alone!

We are all barking dogs who are not worth the crumbs but Christ has set a place at His table for us. We are all mutts whom the Lord has given pedigree by baptism and faith. We don't deserve to be heard but He hears us. We don't deserve mercy, but He forgives us. We don't deserve to eat but He feeds us.

Grace is the surprise of God to all our sin and unworthiness. Every Sunday we face an embarrassment of riches. We come with our money thinking we are giving God something big and He gives us His own Son that embarrasses our offerings. We give Him our worship and think it is a big deal sacrificing a Sunday morning and He gives us our lives back from death.

Every Sunday it is the same ... we come deserving nothing, not even the crumbs due to the dogs. Every Sunday our Lord presents an embarrassment of riches to us. And too often, we walk out that door without a real hint of just what a lavish and giving God we have. You ought to be embarrassed in church – embarrassed that God would be so kind, so merciful, and so gracious to you, a sinner who deserves none of it. Today we pray for just such a heart – shamed by mercy into joy!