

The message for August 16 2020

Last week's message was focused on ridding ourselves of our fears from **using** what gifts and talents that we have been given by God. By doing so we are symbolically getting out of the boat and walking on the waters of life, just like Jesus has called us to do. This week I would like to change the word **using** to the word **sharing**. We are called to **share** our gifts and talents with others. I like the word **sharing** better than the word using because just using the gifts and talents that God gives us does not mean we are improving our world with them. It is when we **share** our gifts with others that the world moves in the direction of a better place.

Let me explain this through one of Pastor Paul's Parables. Today's parable is the parable of the "Church Cook Book". We all know there are many cook books in the world that we can buy. There are books with lots and lots of recipes; simple recipes, gourmet recipes and everything in between. With all the choices of cook books in the world, I have found that the cook books that are used the most, are the ones that come from the churches. I would say that church cook books, in my opinion, are the best of all of the cook books. Why? Well it is simple. The recipes that come from church cook books are the recipes that have been used many years. Handed down from one generation to another. Recipes created in love, specifically made and modified for family members. Recipes that continue to be used because they are **shared**. That is the key word here, **shared**. You see recipes that are held in secrecy eventually are no longer used, because they are not shared. Even recipes that are handed down from one generation to another but not written down and shared eventually are not used or forgotten. A good example of this comes from my own family. My wife and I used to assist my mother-in-law to make sausages every year. The recipe was not written anywhere and we just assisted. Sadly, when my in-laws passed away sausage making stopped because we did not have the

recipe. The special taste of those sausages is now gone. Had we written it down we would most likely have taught it to our children. Had we been able to put it into a church cook book, many people would have been able to make those special sausages. Recipes shared in these church cook books, live on and on and on. Not just for the family who supplied the recipe, but also for the many who buy the cook book. In fact, I know some people who have supplied the original recipes are still using the church cook book when making the recipe. It is easy to find, I guess. Sharing the recipe in the church cook book goes beyond the family keeping the recipes. Other people can now benefit from delicious foods that they might never have known about, all because the recipes were shared. Here is the real kicker to the church cook book parable, when I wrote this parable about the church cook book one of the congregations I was serving had just created one for their 150th anniversary. I bought one, that I know my wife Lucy was very anxious to get her hands on. I did not give it to her right away, because I needed to use it to promote it to other churches in the area. I wanted to share with them some tasty recipes. The more I shared it, the more people wanted the church cook book and the more the recipes of good food were shared. Sharing is a good thing. Sharing improves our world. Our world is a better place when we share.

This brings me to today's scripture reading; ²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great

is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

It has often been said that Jesus’ strange interaction with the Canaanite woman was a test of her faith. I have to wonder if Jesus was not testing the woman at all, but rather his followers and disciples. Think about it. Jesus had shown the disciples they could be channels of **sharing** mercy and love by the miraculous feeding to a vast multitude of people and the healing of the sick. However, when Jesus’ disciples encountered a person in need (not from their faith), they once again wanted to send her away.

I think maybe that’s why Jesus utters the sentiments about being sent only to “the lost sheep of Israel” and not giving the children’s bread to dogs. This sentiment seems offensive to us because it is so out of character with what Jesus calls us to do. It is a good chance that it’s likely they were the very thoughts Jesus’ disciples were thinking as good reason for sending her away. Because she was a despised Gentile, she was beneath their helping! But I think Jesus wants to teach them that no one is beneath their help! Sharing their gifts and talents with her was wrong in their eyes. This is where I believe Jesus was teaching them a lesson of how to share gifts and talents. Gifts and talents, compassion and caring, love and healing needs to be shared with everyone. It should not matter what race or religion, young or old, wealthy or poor, everyone needs a helping hand. When we share our gifts and talents, we are doing the work Jesus has called us to do.

This brings me back to the parable of the church cook book. So many people from the many faith communities have **shared** their wonderful family recipes, that were carried down from one generation to another. For those who have bought or been given the books and have used them to make new tasty treats from them, they have been the benefactors of **sharing**. I would like to think that, that is what Jesus’ message is for us today.

Sharing is the key to benefiting the world —especially the gifts of mercy, love, compassion and grace. We have received these gifts from God, so that we can in turn **share** them with others, all others. No ifs, ands or buts. No discriminating. No exceptions. No exclusions. **Sharing** God's gifts of mercy, love, compassion and grace is for all to experience.

God Bless