

The Story of Jesus

Part 18: The Inclusivity of Jesus

Mark 7:24-37 - [watch online](#)

SUMMARY:

Jesus invites all of us to join a family based upon acceptance, inclusivity, and love... It's available to everyone right now.

MAIN IDEAS:

[00:48] We naturally accept people who are like us and reject people who are different.

[01:44] The Church often reflects the divisions and prejudices we see in our world.

[03:33] Nothing is more inclusive than the Kingdom of God.

[07:30] Jesus didn't just come to heal... he came to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth.

[12:32] Jesus' love is big enough to include everyone.

[16:28] Jesus sweeps away our divisions and prejudices like the trash they are.

[20:47] The Kingdom of God is fiercely, forcefully, and compulsively inclusive.

[21:39] When we are really living in the Kingdom of God the King's heart becomes our heart.

[25:08] No one is left out of the Story of Jesus.

CHALLENGE:

[22:29] Name a person/group who you think is ruining your world.

[23:15] Pray FOR them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever felt pressured to conform to a certain image or expectation to be accepted whether in the Church or elsewhere?
2. Jon said, "The Kingdom of God is fiercely, forcefully, and compulsively inclusive." What thoughts, feelings, agreements or pushbacks do you have to this idea?
3. Read the second half of the story of Peter visiting the gentile home (Acts 11:1-18). What stands out to you?
4. What challenges do you see in embracing Jesus' level of inclusivity? What role do you think prayer can play in helping overcome those challenges?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

TRANSCRIPT:

IN: Have you ever felt rejected b/c you didn't fit within someone else's picture of what you should be?

- Felt you needed to hide the real you in order to be accepted?

Unfortunately, religion is one of the driving forces behind much of the rejection we see and experience in the world.

But from the beginning Jesus invited all of us to something so much better, a family so much bigger than we've ever dreamed.

It's not based on conformity but acceptance, inclusivity and love... it's available to you right now... so let's talk about it together.

WE: We naturally accept people who are like us and reject people who are different.

Human nature throughout history... Conform, be like us... or you're out. You're bad. You're dangerous.

That's why the Story of Jesus was and is so extraordinary...

- Every human is created in the image of God. With inherent value and worth
- All loved equally and fully by our Heavenly Father
- Who loves the entire world so much that he came and gave his life for it.

And Jesus created the Church to invite all of humanity to discover their worth and identity in their loving Creator.

But something went off the tracks...

The Church often reflects the divisions and prejudices we see in our world.

- We accept those who are like us and reject anyone who strays from what we think people should be...
- Why you might have given up on religion/Xianity/church... don't blame you.

We are told either subtly or outright that to follow Jesus we need to...

- Look a certain way
- Belong to a certain economic level
- Vote a certain way
- Married with some kids
- The gatekeepers get to decide who's in and who's out.

The message of the American Church is clear... to belong with us, conform and become like us.

Sadly it's nothing new... 1st Church going through the same things when Mark wrote his account...

- World was divided by race and religion
- Church was divided between Jews and gentiles.
 - Figuring out what it meant to follow a resurrected Jewish Rabbi who was the Savior of the world.

Some Jews even said to follow this Jesus, be in KoG, needed to convert to Judaism- Food laws, circumcision.

It's into this debate, the HS inspires Peter to dictate the story of Jesus to his friend Mark...

And in it we discover... Nothing is more inclusive than the KoG.

GOD: Last time: Jesus accused of not being good Jew and keeping the customs of ritual washing...

Jesus says that the regulations that set the Jews apart from the rest of the world, including their food laws, were over... HUGE.

What matters isn't what you eat, what matters is your heart. Not what goes in it's what comes out...

Pretty major stuff... just told off some of the most powerful people in their nation.

- So decides to take a trip to let things cool off...

V. 24-26a (...her daughter.) Mostly gentile region

Difficult to fully appreciate the animosity between Jews and gentiles... Think about Jews/Muslims in that area now...

- Both sides
- Jews called gentiles unclean dogs
- Gentiles said same things

And now the epitome of uncleanness comes to Jesus...

- A gentile--woman--daughter has an unclean spirit.
- 3 strikes of uncleanness.

No "good" rabbi, let alone Jew, would associate with such a person.

But somehow, she knew something about Jesus... something others hadn't even guessed at

V. 26b (Since she...)-27

Disciples good Jewish boys... wonder if they were thinking, "FINALLY! No more wishy washy "forgive enemies Jesus" He's going to take a stand against the gentiles! Let her have it Jesus"

And we read it and are shocked!

Jesus comes off as a racist jerk here.

- What is going on? This seems really offensive and very unJesus-y.

Like was he going to refuse to heal? But then she called him out on his racism and he was like, "Oh right, yeah I'm Jesus I should heal people. Godo thing I'm wearing my WWJD bracelet. I was wrong, Ok here's your healing." Poof?

To understand we have to dig a bit...

1st, what is Jesus getting at with feeding children and throwing their food to the dogs thing?

The food isn't just Jesus' power or healings, it is the blessing of his ministry, everything he came to do.

- Who he is and what his teachings and healings actually point to...

Jesus didn't just come to heal... he came to inaugurate the KoG on earth.

To fulfill God's promise to his people 1000s of years earlier... that he would come and restore/rescue them.

He is the saving Messiah the Jewish nation had been waiting for... and his 1st mission was to them, to announce God's promise has been fulfilled... their real deliverance is here... their King has arrived.

- Give them a chance to repent and believe and enjoy the KoG

But there was something else in God's promise... this coming King would not only rescue Israel but he would bring his kingdom to all nations.

- **Isaiah 49:6, Daniel 7:13-14**

And Jesus has this in mind... and he knows somehow this woman knows it too...

Since we're reading it, we can't know the tone for sure... but most likely, in context, it seems like Jesus' response is more of a tongue in cheek snarkiness

He does offensively call her a dog... but doesn't use the word for dirty, mongrel street dog like the Jews usually called the gentiles... it's the word for family puppy.

So with, I think, a grin and twinkle in his eye... He challenges her... He sees her strength, sees that she's a fighter and won't back down... knows she is up to the task he has for her...

She has pushed aside the prejudices she was raised with, falls at this Jewish rabbi's feet.

And he knows her need... knows she's desperate for her daughter... his heart breaks with hers

- Feels her fear, agony, helplessness

And he knows she has tapped into the magnificent mercy and love of God...

"You know Jews and gentiles don't get along, you know the names we call each other... why do you want *ME* a Jewish rabbi to help you?"

- "Come on. You beautiful/strong daughter of God... Say the quiet part out loud... tell everyone what you know"
- "Is it right for me to help you?"

V. 28 Jesus gives this gentile, "unclean" woman the room to declare for the world... YES IT IS RIGHT for the Jewish Messiah to help me!

You came for the Jews 1st but you are for the world. And even if the rest of us just get crumbs it will be more than enough.

It's what Paul explained in his theological masterpiece Romans- **Romans 1:16**

Jesus is Israel's promised Messiah. And he came to Israel 1st, but even though the gentiles had to wait for a bit... they are not excluded from his kingdom.

In fact he won't just throw scraps to the puppies, he will transform them into full, accepted, and loved children with an equal place at the table with the original children.

V. 29-30 Jesus, "YES! EXACTLY!"

You get it. And b/c of this answer... the demon HAS left you daughter...

- Like he had already done it before she answered?

This encounter sets up the rest of the history of the Jesus movement... through Jesus the children's food is being shared with the entire world.

Jesus' love is big enough to include everyone.

Then to make it even more clear, Mark records another story for us...

V. 31 Ten Towns... gentile area where he healed the demon possessed guy who lived in the tombs. Told him to go tell what God had done for him... well it worked...

V. 32-35 Ewww... Jesus is so weird right. A little, but what he does makes sense when you actually think about it...

First I love how Jesus leads him away from the crowd so they can be alone... so personal.

- I'm not here to use you to put on a show for the crowd
- This is you and me... this is about the trust and love of your friends
- I see you. I see your pain. And I'm going to do something about it.

But why the weird stuff?

Think about it... The man couldn't hear and couldn't speak...

- So how is Jesus going to communicate with him?
- How is Jesus going to know what the man wants, not just what the friends want...
- He's going to use hand gestures... he's going to accommodate what the man needs...

Stick his fingers in the man's ear... "You want these healed? Yes? Ok."

"You want me to heal your tongue?" There was a belief that saliva had a medical, even magical healing symbolism... hence the spit.

"Yes, heal your tongue too? Ok..."

- Giving the guy a chance to express for himself that he trusts Jesus could do it...

V. 36-37 Now at first glance this seems just like a bizarre healing story... however it is showing the inclusion of Jesus and the Kingdom he brought...

He performs this specific healing in a gentile area... why a big deal... b/c it's what God had said would happen when he came to save...

Is. 35:4-6a (...for joy!) The healing is a sign that God's love is breaking into world... and it's for everyone

Jesus sweeps away our divisions and prejudices like the trash they are.

In Jesus, The King of the Jews had become the Savior of the world.

It's so unlike anything or anyone who had come before... so remarkable it was hard for the disciples and 1st Church to comprehend... God had to force them to see it...

Two stories in particular...

After the resurrection and after the disciples receive the HS... A sign that the KoG had indeed come...

God tells the Apostle Philip to take a walk on the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza... and a chariot comes by and the HS tells him to go up to it.

Hears someone reading one of Isaiah's prophecies about the Messiah.

It's an Ethiopian eunuch who was an official in the Ethiopian government.

- Eunuch- Castrated. Considered not male or female.

Philip asks him... do you understand what you are reading?

And the eunuch says, "How can I unless someone explains it?"

This man had gone to Jerusalem looking for the God of the Jews... but b/c he was a eunuch/ethiopian (gentile) he wasn't allowed in the temple...

- The people who were supposed to show the world God's love had rejected him.

But he didn't let that deter him. He spent a large amount of money to buy a hand-written scroll of at least the book of Isaiah.. Trying to find this God.

God saw him. Loved him.

Sent Philip to tell him the Good News of Jesus

- The Messiah has come and his great love is for all people...

The eunuch sees water and asks one of the most important questions ever asked... "Why can't I be baptized?"

Philip understands what's happening... There is nothing stopping the eunuch now from being fully included in God's family... so he baptized him.

A while later...

God gives Peter a vision of a sheet coming down from heaven full of unclean animals

- And a voice says "Get up, Peter, kill and eat."
- Peter says, "No these are unclean... it's against your law"
- And the voice says, "Don't call unclean what I have made clean."

At that moment a messenger from a Roman army officer knocks on the door asking Peter to come tell them the Good News

- When Peter gets there he says, **Acts 10:28**
- Peter tells them about Jesus and the HS falls upon all of the gentiles there.

The KoG is fiercely, forcefully, and compulsively inclusive.

Jesus had to force his own disciples to open it to everyone. Even those who seemed it was impossible to accept.

YOU: So who are we to say who is in and who is out?

Who are we to allow any preconceived judgements, prejudices, preferences keep us from fully embracing every person searching for what Jesus can give them?

So who have we been excluding? Who do we believe is unclean? Who have we felt were too far outside the reach of Jesus' forgiveness and love?

When we are really living in the Kingdom of God the King's heart becomes our heart

- It's his loving and inclusive heart that moves us to truly welcome and accept those who are different from us.

Every Jesus Follower needs to stop worrying about who should be excluded and focus on who's invited... everyone.

- We're not throwing the party... it's not our party... we're just handing out the invitations
- When Jesus died for you... he died for them When Jesus rose for you he rose for them.
- I would rather get in trouble for who I accept than who I reject.

Challenge: Name a person/group who you think is ruining your world.

- Groups/type of person/whatever...
- You're disappointed b/c it seems like they are getting their way/challenging everything you had hoped/worked for?
- Could be represented by celebrity/politician/relative

Have that person in mind? What does our King tell us to do? Love them and pray for them.

Pray FOR them.

- Not that they will change their minds/lose/see the error of their ways
- Pray that God will show you their real needs... pray for His empathy and compassion to grab your heart for them
- Pray that they will see God's love for them... that he will bring healing and health to their bodies, relationships, hearts.
- That they will see how loved and adored they are by their Heavenly Father.
- If need guidance Pray the Lord's Prayer for them

Psst... it's for you too. It's virtually impossible to keep hating someone if you are praying for them.

WE: Imagine what would happen if we stopped trying to figure out who is out... and spent our time letting people know they can be IN.

What if instead of trying to WIN we focused on trying to love?

Small little us... could actually make a difference. We could show an alternative to what the world has always known.

There is a King who came for all of us, to unite all of us, and give us true full abundant life.

He invites every single person, whoever/wherever/whatever to come and bring their unique God-given personalities, cultures, stories... and experience his Kingdom now and forever.

B/c... No one is left out of the Story of Jesus.