

The Ministry of Humiliation

Matthew 15:21-31

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June 13, 2004

Before we start, I just need to get something off my chest. Duncan, your prayer was weak. I'm beginning to think you're incapable of doing your job. You're totally insufficient for what we've asked you to do. Your work is like crap. You're like a turd, the scum off of my toilet bowl. You're like a dog sniffing his own shame. And you expect to come to the table of the Lord? *Dang*.

Well, the text this morning reminded me of a story that had a huge impact on me as a boy: the story of the Warm Fuzzies. It goes like this:

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there lived two happy people called Tim and Maggie with their two children, John and Lucy. To understand how happy they were you have to understand how things were in those days. You see, in those happy days everyone was given a small, soft Fuzzy Bag when born. Any time a person reached into this bag they were able to pull out a Warm Fuzzy. Warm Fuzzies were very much in demand because whenever someone was given a Warm Fuzzy it made them feel warm and fuzzy all over.

Somebody came to my church along about 1969 or 1970 and preached on Warm Fuzzies. The story was written by a psychologist who was popular at the time. It continues:

In those days it was very easy to get Warm Fuzzies. Anytime that somebody felt like it, he might walk up to you and say, "I'd like to have a Warm Fuzzy." You would then reach into your bag and pull out a Fuzzy the size of a child's hand. As soon as the Fuzzy saw the light of day it would smile and blossom into a large, shaggy Warm Fuzzy. When you laid the Warm Fuzzy on the person's head, shoulder or lap it would snuggle up and melt right against their skin and make them feel good all over.

People were always asking each other for Warm Fuzzies, and since they were always given freely, getting enough of them was never a problem. There were always plenty to go around, and so everyone was happy and felt warm and fuzzy most of the time.

One day a bad witch who made salves and potions for sick people became angry because everyone was so happy and feeling good and no one was buying potions and salves. The witch was very clever and devised a very wicked plan.

The witch tells people they might just run out of Warm Fuzzies, and she gives them Cold Pricklies. So

people start giving Cold Pricklies instead of Warm Fuzzies. Warm Fuzzies are like compliments, and Cold Pricklies are like criticisms. The story continues:

Not long ago, a young woman with big hips came to this [now] unhappy land. She seemed not to have heard about the bad witch and was not worried about running out of Warm Fuzzies. She gave them out freely, even when not asked. They called her the Hip Woman and disapproved of her because she was giving the children the idea that they should not worry about running out of Warm Fuzzies. The children liked her very much because they felt good around her and they began to follow her example giving out Warm Fuzzies whenever they felt like it.

I remember the guy preaching had an actual bag of Warm Fuzzies and a bucket of Cold Pricklies. For months people were doing the Warm Fuzzy thing saying, “I need a Warm Fuzzy” or “Gosh, that was kind of a Cold Prickly.” I figured that the big Hip Woman was like a picture of Jesus, and His church was to be, like, the embassy of Warm Fuzziness. The story ends like this:

The struggle spread all over the land and is probably going on right where you live. If you want to, and I hope you do, you can join by freely giving and asking for Warm Fuzzies and being as loving and healthy as you can.

Well, I really loved the whole Warm Fuzzy thing at first. But then:

1. It started feeling oppressive. (Everyone needed their stinkin' Warm Fuzzies!)
2. It started feeling insincere, like Warm Fuzzy lies.
3. And I wondered if Warm Fuzzies were the solution for Hitler and Stalin and North Vietnam and witchcraft.
4. And what if the Hip Woman gave a Warm Fuzzy to a witch? What would that look like?
5. And then I read my Bible, and parts didn't seem warm and fuzzy.

Matthew 15:21:

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Well, that's just pretty flippin' warm and fuzzy, isn't it? Jesus sounds worse than me rippin' on Duncan.

Can you imagine how humiliating this was for this poor woman? I can only imagine.

1. Tyre and Sidon is another way of saying Paganville.
2. She was a Canaanite. Like we said a few weeks ago, a Jew would read “pagan lesbian witch.” The Canaanites were the sworn enemies of the Jews.
3. Her daughter was “severely” demonized. We all battle demonic spirits, so we all have the same struggle. But this text implies there are degrees of demonization. Demons gain access to people through sin on someone’s part.

Whatever the case, this woman’s life and her daughter’s life were being raped by the Evil One—sin, darkness, and shame. How humiliating!

She follows Jesus and His disciples screaming: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!” She calls Jesus “Lord” and refers to Him as “Messiah.” Even though the Jews don’t know, she knows who Jesus is. She’s utterly desperate, and Jesus doesn’t answer *a word*. Not a word. How humiliating!

Do you ever feel like that? Jesus answers others and humiliates you with silence.

His disciples come and beg Jesus to get rid of her because she’s bothering them. Jesus says, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” How humiliating!

She’s a Canaanite who doesn’t live in Israel. Jesus is sent to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Yet that does make you wonder: What’s He doing in Tyre and Sidon?

Well, she comes and kneels down in front of Him. (The word translated *kneel*—”proskuneo” is also translated *worship*.) She worships Him crying, “Lord, help me!” And Jesus answers: “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Dogs! Dogs were despised and unclean animals in Jesus’ day. Gentiles were referred to as dogs. That didn’t mean Lassie or Benji. In Matthew 7:6, Jesus says, “Don’t give dogs what is holy.” The Jews would understand that as, “Don’t give Torah to Gentiles”—“Don’t give the Word of God to pagans.” Some in the early church taught that it meant, “You don’t give communion bread to the unbaptized.” Don’t give dogs what is holy. The Word is holy; the body of Christ is holy.

In front of everyone and to her face Jesus says, “It’s not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” He uses the diminutive, so it can be translated “little dogs.” But little or big, a dog was unclean and despised—an epithet (cut-down). We have another word for female dog that might be the most accurate translation. “It’s not right to give the children’s bread to little . . . dogs.”

If you’re offended, I’m sorry. But I’m supposed to preach from the Bible and not from the tale of the Warm Fuzzies.

Well, this Canaanite woman, this pagan witch idolater—whatever she was, she was humiliated: by birth, by environment, by sins committed against her, by sins she’s committed herself: humiliated by this world. And now she’s humiliated by the silence of Jesus, the disdain of His disciples, and then, even the answer on His lips. She must feel like she’s been stripped naked, flogged, and nailed to a cross—crucified. I can only imagine.

Does Jesus ever seem mean to you?

Do you feel humiliated by God, like He set things up just to get you crucified?

Sometimes He even seems to use *church* that way, as if that's what church is for.

Larry Crabb said basically, "That's what a small group is for: to look bad in the presence of love." Well, I hope you sense the presence of love; but spend enough time with people, and you're sure to look bad. Church is spending time with people in the light of truth, and that can be humiliating. *Humility*. You remember we sing that song: "Humble thyself in the sight of the Lord." Humility does seem to be a goal we are to aspire to, but how do *you* humble your *self*?

A rabbi threw himself down before the altar in the temple, and with great humility he cried, "I am nobody, I am nobody." The cantor (that is, the worship leader) was moved by the rabbi's humility. He too threw himself before the altar crying, "I am nobody, I am nobody." The janitor saw the devotion of these two religious men and threw himself before the altar crying, "I am nobody, I am nobody." The cantor turned to the rabbi and indicating the janitor remarked, "Look who thinks he's a nobody."

How do you humble your self without just getting more of yourself? That's what drives the world nuts about religious people. We can be so self-consciously humble and so unconsciously arrogant.

You need to be humble, but you can't humble the self with the self, just like:

You need to die, but you can't kill the self with the self.
It's just more self, more sin—the sin of suicide.

You can't forget yourself with your self.

You can't lose yourself with your self.

And if you hate yourself with your self, or despise yourself with your self, it's just more self. You're stuck on yourself, and that's the opposite of humility.

I heard someone say, “You'll know if you're a servant by how you react when you're treated like one.” So many religiously “humble” people get entirely offended when treated like a servant. They start demanding their rights or worse: advertising their humility by moping around and proclaiming how oppressed they are for being treated like the servant they say they are.

Well, I'm not sure that you can really humble *you*. So humility must come from being humiliated somehow. Humility must come with humiliations. People laugh when I say that, but how else could it come? It must be done to you.

You might say, “Well, ‘humble yourself’ is James 4:10 and 1 Peter 5:6.” Actually, it's not. It is, but it isn't. It's actually an aorist passive imperative verb. So a better translation is, “Be humbled.” “Let yourself be humbled.” It's something that happens to you or that you allow to happen.

James 4:10: “Be humbled before the Lord and He will exalt you.”

I Peter 5:6: “Be humbled under the mighty hand of God so that in due time He may exalt you.” Exalt you . . . exalted by God.

Gosh, if that’s really true, maybe Jesus isn’t mean. Maybe He just wants us to have far more than warm fuzzy feelings. I’ve found that you can get a warm fuzzy feeling from a couple pints of beer. I’ve also found that you can get a warm fuzzy feeling from affirmation and compliments. Approval or beer: You pick your drug, but I suspect there are less strings attached to beer, and the hangover is not as severe.

Well, whatever our warm fuzzies (approval, beer, success, religion), they can easily become the way we avoid pain: emotional pain.

Which is often the way we avoid humiliation,
 Which is the way we avoid humility,
 Which is the way we avoid the cross,
 Which is the way we avoid Jesus, and life and resurrection and exaltation, all because we’re addicted to our own pride, enabling our own hell.

We seek warm fuzzies to affirm *ourselves*. And our selves are the problem.

Why are you so worried about criticisms of yourself? Didn’t you say you were hoping to die to yourself? so you can live exalted with Jesus? You know, you can pick up your cross, but somebody else has to pound the nails.

You must be crucified (aorist passive imperative).
 You must be humiliated (aorist passive imperative).

If Duncan really believed that, he'd be *grateful* right now. Maybe he'd stand up and say, "Oh thank you, Peter! You have publicly humiliated me, and even with the truth; for I *am* weak and insufficient and incapable of fulfilling my calling!"

Of course I, Peter, am too: weak, insufficient, incapable. Even more than that, Paul says, "We have become, and now are, as the refuse [crap] of the world, the off-scouring of all things." He considered his religious good deeds to be crap.

Why do we get so upset when people agree with the Bible about us? We really *are* sinners (but I guess we don't believe it). We really are sinners saved by nothing but grace.

So I can say, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like Duncan!" And Duncan can say, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like you, Peter." You see, that's a warm fuzzy I can live with. It's honest about me, honest about Jesus, honest about grace.

The safest place in all the world is hanging on a cross with Jesus. And church needs to be a safe place, a safe place to be humiliated. Safe because we're "humiliated in the presence of love." Safe because we won't violate each other's shame but will treasure our shared humility.

Surrendered shame is humility.

So maybe Duncan should have said, "Thank you, Peter, for the humility" or maybe Duncan should have said,

“Thank you, God, for the humility, for Peter intended it for evil, but you, God, intended it for good.”

Jesus said, “It is impossible but that offenses [scandal, crosses] will come, but woe unto him through whom they come.” Maybe that means, “Yes, Peter, like yourself, Duncan may need to be crucified, but you had better not make it your business to pound the nails. In fact, you’ve already pounded enough nails . . . in me.”

So it’s not my job to accuse with the purpose of bringing condemnation. It’s not my job (at least not yet) to judge the world. Yet maybe it is the world’s job to humiliate me. It’s the world’s job to help us all die to ourselves.

This world is killing you. Yet when we believe the Gospel, we are freed from the world, passed from “death into life.” This world no longer controls me; I’m already dead. I have no stock in my prideful, old, self-righteous, insecure self. I’m no longer addicted to the world’s warm fuzzies and cold pricklies. I’m no longer enslaved to Satan, for He has been disarmed.

You know, devil means *accuser* — accuser with the intent to condemn. That’s what he does, and that’s where his power lies, in extortion. He accuses you and you think, “Oh no. I’d better hide myself, cover myself, run from God, hide in the trees, or hide my heart in some warm fuzzies.” Satan will accuse and accuse and accuse so you’ll hide deeper, deeper, deeper. He’ll say, “You did it,” just so you’ll say, “Did not!”

“Did not!”

“Did too!”

“Did not!”

“Did too!”

Deeper and deeper he drives you into lies, alone, in fear of being seen.

But believe the Gospel. Next time Satan comes to call and starts accusing you, just say:

Yes, I am weak, but Christ is strong. Yes, I am insufficient, but Christ is more than sufficient. Yes, I have lusted and committed adultery, I've slandered and committed murder, I've harbored resentment, refusing to forgive. Yes, I've elevated myself above the living God and so deserve to die. Yes, I've sinned and sinned and sinned: I am a sinner. Thank God you have reminded me, because now I'm confessing my sin to God in Jesus' name as you watch! So I've been crucified with Christ. "It's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." So get the hell out of my apartment and out of my life! And take all your damn warm fuzzies with you!

Jesus has given you that victory.

This is all very personal to me because I've come to know some Canaanite women, and they've taught me great things about myself and God and the way Satan (the Accuser) works.

Did you notice Jesus didn't accuse this Canaanite woman? He didn't say, "You're not a child of Israel," and He didn't say, "You are a dog." However:

- He did let her suffer and feel her own emptiness.
- He did let her long for grace and hope for love.
- He did let her see her own sin.
- He did let her be humbled.
- He let her come to the end of herself.
- He let her die to herself.

If we had been there, I bet we would *not* have let her. We would have said, “Oh, honey, you’re not anything like a dog.” We would have enabled her.

The meanest thing you can say to an alcoholic is, “Oh no, I don’t think you have a drinking problem.” The meanest thing you can say to a sinner is, “Oh, gosh, no—you’re not proud, self-centered, and arrogant. I affirm you.”

How could you really give a warm fuzzy to a witch?—affirm her? Maybe the problem is *her*. She needs to die so she can live. Well, if you really loved her . . . maybe you could die *with* her or *for* her. She’d probably kill you anyway.

Maybe we’re all like that Canaanite woman. “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” We’re all rebels. We all need something more powerful than warm fuzzies, even if at first it feels like a cold prickly—a nail.

Over the years, praying with my friend who came out of abuse and Satanism, I’ve learned to be careful who to pray for her with. For the Lord would uncover such horrifying memories where she experienced such painful abuse, it was an incredible temptation to guard her from all pain with any warm fuzzy available.

In those places where she’s been horrifically accused by the Evil One, it’s tempting to battle with warm fuzzies. I mean, it’s tempting to simply say, “It’s not your fault. It’s not your fault.” Yet that might only be rearming

the Enemy. That may keep her from humiliation, but then it also keeps her from the cross, which keeps her from the greatest glories I've ever seen.

Sometimes after she'd confess, Jesus would say: "Honey, that wasn't your fault." But *He* can say that, for He knows when it's her fault and when it isn't.

Well, Jesus didn't accuse that Canaanite woman, but He let this world humble her like it humbled the prodigal son and drove him to his father. Yet the prodigal son's heart wasn't humbled by the world. He was humbled by something else: the father's love.

Jesus does humble us. He humbles us with His grace. He lets us see we pounded the nails in His hands and feet. He lets us see we crucified Him with our sin. It's His kindness that leads us to repentance, for His grace exposes our depravity. His light illumines our darkness.

The world sets us up: to behold His love. When I behold His love, I die to me and live to Him. His cross kills me and sets me free. I think the Canaanite woman was already seeing it.

Jesus said, "I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she worships Him saying, "Lord, help me!—be my helpmeet." Jesus says, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." How humiliating! unless you're already humble. You'll know if you're humble by how you react when you're humiliated. She responds, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their lord's table."

Well, she didn't live in Israel,
 and she felt like a dog.
 But she didn't need to believe in herself,
 only in Him.

She wasn't sure who she was,
 but she saw who He was.
 It didn't matter who she was,
 only who He was.

In verse 28, Jesus answers her, “O woman, great [*megas* in Greek] is your faith.” She had been screaming for mercy, and now she has faith. Remember in Matthew 9, Jesus saw lost sheep—sheep without a shepherd, and He said, “The harvest is plentiful.” We preached it was a harvest of faith and mercy, like bread and wine, like body and blood. In the silence and pain, Jesus had been growing faith and preparing a harvest of mercy.

He says, “Great is your faith.” Faith is what God wants. I can't think of a greater compliment ever given. “Oh woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire”—“as you wish.” And her daughter was healed, saved, delivered, made whole *instantly*. Only Jesus could do that, and He does it with His blood. His blood is mercy; it is His life.

For a time, He withheld words so that He could give her *The Word*. He would give her Himself. He is holy, and He gives her Himself. He does not give dogs what is holy! She's anything but a dog. She may have behaved like a dog, but she's a child.

Jesus said he was “only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” but He was sent to her, for He went to her, and He “only did what He saw His Father doing.” That means she *was* a “lost sheep of the house of Israel” and never *was* a dog—only *thought* she was a dog.

In Matthew 10, Jesus says, “Don't go to the Gentiles; rather the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” I think that means that I'm not to think of myself as

preaching to Gentiles, pagans, deadheads, or Canaanite dogs, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: my lost brothers and sisters that don't know who they are, the Israel of God dispersed and exiled in this fallen world. That changes the way you preach or talk to your neighbor. They're not dogs but lost sheep.

She never was a dog but a confused sheep, and more than a sheep, a child. Children eat at the father's table. The children's bread is the body of Christ. And she's not only *of* the house of Israel; she *is* the house of Israel—the house of God. He longs to enter. The bread she eats is Jesus, her helpmeet, her groom. She really isn't a pagan witch but the bride of Christ. She just had to be emptied of herself to be filled with Him, which is ecstasy forever.

Do you think Jesus likes being your Savior? Or is saving you, like, this *painful chore* He took because no one else in the Trinity wanted the job?

Do you think Jesus *likes* being your helper?

Do you think Jesus *likes* being your groom?

I won't belabor this, but you do know that a husband—a good helper—longs to love his bride in her place of shame, the very place she covered in fear long ago in the Garden, that very place of emptiness. He romances it and fills it with himself, and the two become one flesh.

Recently Susan and I were praying for our friend. It seems demons can no longer access her body. However, the Lord still has her remember places where she feels great shame. We prayed through a painful memory where men

had violated her sexually. Sexual sin and pornography is violated shame—violated emptiness.

We prayed through the memory. She had a vision of Jesus in the memory. She struggled with wanting to hide, but finally she surrendered her shame to Him; that is, she confessed her humiliation, sin, and sorrow. Jesus cleansed her and covered her in His righteousness. Then He spoke to her. I asked, “What did He say?” She said, “He just told me: ‘You have no idea how beautiful you are, and how easy you are to love.’”

So on the night that He was betrayed, He took bread, and having given thanks He blessed it and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way after supper, He took the cup and said, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

And so, Israel of God, children of God, sheep of His pasture, bride of Christ; those of you “poor in spirit,” “mourning,” and “meek”; those “hungering and thirsting for righteousness”: You have no idea how beautiful you are and how easy you are to love.

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The Lord is calling you to His Father’s table to eat the bread of life, His very body and very blood. Believe the Gospel and worship Him. That’s how you battle the darkness.

Some of you are in a place of suffering; some are in a place right now of peace and joy; some of you feel like

the Canaanite woman before Jesus said His final words to her; some of you feel like her afterwards. Wherever you are, you battle the darkness by blessing the name of the Lord and believing the Gospel and what Jesus has done for you. *It's true.*

Do you see what this means? It means you're *free*. Wherever you are, you're *free*. Whatever this world or the Evil One throws at you, whatever people throw at you (even if they are curses right from the pit of hell), the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ turns all of those things into blessings for you. For God "will not leave you nor forsake you." And He will "finish the work that He started." And "all things work together for the good of them that love Him and are called according to His purpose." You're *free*. May you believe it.

And by the way, you can give each other warm fuzzies. It's just that the very best warm fuzzy you could ever give a person is: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like you!" That may feel a bit cold and prickly at first, like a nail driven through your hand. But the things God has planned for you, you can't even begin to conceive yet! So in Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

“Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you.”

Matthew 7:6

These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay.”

Matthew 10:5-8

“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” . . . Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.” But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute

speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Matthew 15:8-12, 21-31

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Matthew 18:10-14

So he told them this parable: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? . . . Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?” . . . And he said, “There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. . . . But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.”

Luke 15:3-4, 8, 11-12, 22-24

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.”

John 10:14-16

“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.”

Matthew 21:43

For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God. . . . That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants—not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but that Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone

Romans 2:28-29, 4:16, 9:30-32

But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:14-16

She [the Canaanite woman] catches Christ with his own words. He compares her to a dog, she conceded it, and asks nothing more than that he let her be a dog, as he himself judged her to be. Where will Christ now take refuge? He is caught. Truly, people let the dog have the crumbs under the table; it is entitled to that. Therefore Christ now completely opens his heart to her and yields to her will, so that she is now no dog, but even a child of Israel. . . . Now whoever understands here the actions of this poor woman and catches God in his own judgment, and says: Lord, it is true, I am a sinner and not worthy of thy grace; but still thou hast promised sinners forgiveness, and thou art come not to call the righteous, but, as St. Paul says in I Tim 15, “to save sinners.” Behold, then must God according to his own judgment have mercy upon us.

Martin Luther

God creates everything out of nothing—and everything which God is to use he first reduces to nothing.

Soren Kierkegaard

To a visitor who described himself as a seeker after truth the master said, "If what you seek is truth, there is one thing you must have above all else." "I know. An overwhelming passion for it." "No. An unremitting readiness to admit you may be wrong."

Anthony DeMello

Faith means to wager everything and to suffer for the truth, despite the offenses of the Incarnation and the cross. Faith, therefore, requires a leap. It is not a matter of galvanizing the will to believe something there is no evidence for, but a leap of commitment. "The leap is the category of decision"—the decision to commit one's being totally to a God whose existence is rationally uncertain and whose redemption is utterly an offense.

Charles Moore

Nothing is more repugnant to capable, reasonable people than grace.

Charles Wesley

When a man or woman is truly honest (not just working at it), it is virtually impossible to insult them personally. There is nothing to insult. Those who were truly ready for the kingdom were just such people. Their inner poverty of spirit and rigorous honesty had set them free. They were people who had nothing to be proud of.

Brennan Manning

Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ

Philippians 3:2-8

We have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all things.

I Corinthians 4:13b

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:25-28

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