

You probably all heard that well know question *What Would Jesus Do?* Or perhaps you've seen bracelets that say: *WWJD*. Once I heard a pastor preach on this topic and he said. I will tell you what would Jesus do: He would die! The point he was making is that our ultimate goal isn't to be contemplating what would Jesus do, but to believe in God's grace revealed to us through the death and the resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.

I could not agree more. And yet as I read today's readings I couldn't help asking myself that question: *What would Jesus do* if he'd be one of us living in today's society that is struggling with so many different issues. What would Jesus do in today's society that's so divided ideologically or theologically. What would Jesus do in the society where the poor and the sick are crying for help? What would Jesus do in the society where often times the solutions to the problems are words: It's their own fault you can't do anything about it.

See the answer that Jesus would die is very true. For that's what Jesus did. He did die for the hurting world as well for the world that lives in plenty. He did die for the poor as well as for the rich. He died for the healthy and sick, (pause) homosexuals and straight. That's right, God does not show favoritism. That's from Romans 2:12. God died so that by his grace through faith we can live. That we can live as one body of Christ, brothers and sisters united, for there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

And so knowing that we've been saved by the blood of Christ, that God took us all in despite our sinful nature, if this is the reality of God's grace in our lives, what does that mean for us? (pause) What does Jesus call us to do?

In our second reading James 2:1 we read: My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? Oh boy aren't these words tough? God accuses us of favoritism. In George Orwell's famous novel *Animal Farm* we read: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." Don't these words often time reflect our way of thinking? (pause) Yes we hear that favoritism was a serious issue two thousand years ago, it was a problem in the 50's when the *Animal Farm* was published and it still is a very serious problem even today.

And so what is the answer in midst of our torn society, or church? What is the answer as we try to live our lives and respond to the needs of our nation, community, or neighbors? How do we present Christ to our friends and families as we struggle with many difficult issues and problems?

Again we have to start with Christ. Not with the question: *What would Jesus do?* But with the question: *What has Jesus already done for me?* For Paul gives us an answer to this question when he says: *You are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* You've been freed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and no one can take this gift from you. Now what shall we do with this gift of freedom? Jesus says: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* But when Jesus talks about neighbor he doesn't talk about the neighbor we choose. He talks about every neighbor. For remember, God shows no favoritism, and James in our second reading adds: But if you show partiality, you commit sin. And the truth is if we show partiality how much different are we from those who we judge or condemn?

In today's Gospel we hear about Jesus traveling to the region of Tyre, which was north of Galilee. In other words Jesus goes to land of Gentiles that were not considered equal with Jews because of many social and religious differences. Yet it is in the land of Tyre where Jesus seeks some quiet time and where he is approached by a Gentile woman of Syrophenician origin. This woman is different from Jesus, we can't even think about equality, in fact she's breaking all social and religious rules as she's approaching a Jewish man. (pause) But there is one other thing that we cannot ignore about this woman. And that's the fact that this woman is in need. She needs help, she's desperate, and she's at the end of the rope. Her daughter is sick and she has no means to help her.

Can we relate to the situation of this woman? I believe we all can. What is the first thing that we pray for in situation like this? That there will be someone to lend a helping hand. That the child may be cured. Well this woman came to the right guy, thank God. Out of all people wouldn't you want to be able to come to Christ himself? And the thing is that you can. For we're Christ's body, we're his hands, his ears his and his mouth. We have each other as Christ lives within us.

And so this woman approaches Jesus for help and Jesus says: *Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.* Now to call someone a dog in Jesus' time was not a compliment. And if I think there are words that Jesus himself felt sorry for saying out loud, I believe these would be the words. Can you imagine that you'd come to Jesus for help and this would be his response? The nightmare becoming reality. And yet there are millions of people that hear this answer daily. They hear that there is help, just not for them. A mother with a sick child that cannot be helped (because some are more equal than others).

If this would be the final answer of Jesus it would truly be a tragedy. What these words of Jesus mean is that he came for the lost sheep of Israel. That was his prior mission, and through this chosen nation a salvation to the world was to be revealed. But we know that Jesus wasn't very well received among Jews and so we can feel in these verses God's broken heart over the rejection of his people. But that's not where this story ends and that makes all the difference.

For we know that the woman believed she came to the right man. She was persistent but most importantly she believed that Jesus can and will help her. She knew she wouldn't be rejected, denied, even though she's a stranger, even though she's a woman and a gentile. There is hope for all of us because of love and grace of our God. For all of us have sinned, all of us have something in our lives we could be rejected for. Many of us are hiding it as much as we can for we're ashamed. And yet God is here to help, to heal, to accept all of us just the way we are. For God does not show favoritism.

In the beginning we asked ourselves that tough question what would Jesus do? There are many different situations in our lives where he calls us to do many different things. But everything that God requires of us is summed up in Matthew 22 or in our second reading: *Love your Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all you mind. And love your neighbor as yourself.* These words answer the question: What would Jesus do. And as long as we'll be able to live out this greatest commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, there won't be any partiality among us.

Amen