

After the Sermon Hymn: *Stepping down to the congregation:*

Matt 15: 10-28 **“Bold Moves”** (08/14/2011)

- by Rev. Peter Dennebaum -

God's peace with you!

Let us read again together what belongs to us: Gods word! And afterwards, again, you are invited to speak out loud the sentence, phrase or word which has become important to you while reading. Let us read now in unison from page 17 of the New Testament Section in our pew bibles. Let us read from the gospel of Matthew, chapter 15, the verses 10-28.

### ***Things That Defile***

*10 Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, 'Listen and understand: <sup>11</sup>it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.' <sup>12</sup>Then the disciples approached and said to him, 'Do you know that the Pharisees took offence when they heard what you said?' <sup>13</sup>He answered, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. <sup>14</sup>Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.' <sup>15</sup>But Peter said to him, 'Explain this parable to us.' <sup>16</sup>Then he said, 'Are you also still without understanding? <sup>17</sup>Do you not see that whatever goes into*

*the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? <sup>18</sup>But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. <sup>20</sup>These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.'*

### ***The Canaanite Woman's Faith***

*21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>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.'<sup>23</sup>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.'<sup>24</sup>He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'<sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.'<sup>26</sup>He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.'<sup>27</sup>She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.'<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.*

What ever has become important to you while reading – this is the moment where you can share it: A sentence, a phrase, a word. Repetitions are welcome!

...

Please pray with me:

*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.*

Last Sunday you self made God still speaking in the bible story about Joseph, his brothers, his father Jacob-Israel and Joseph's buyers. I am sure that I will not forget so fast how you revived this story and made it therefore speak able for us. You heard in the first reading how the historical story ended – with a kind of happy end, with all the ingredients of a good Hollywood drama: open welcome, forgiveness, tears and reunion.

But I also spoke last week about Jesus, who was not as sweet, naive and socially and politically toothless as he is made in our days in so many churches. If Jesus only would have gone around and would have told everybody “Be kind, be lovely, accept everything like a sheep, don't resist, trust in God alone, smile and pray, stay in your church, sing nicely hymns – but beyond that don't question authority or even try to change the reality you live in” - Jesus would have been really a totally apolitical figure. But the question from last week still remains: Why on earth should they have crucified him??? If you would have been a Roman ruler, for example Pontius Pilate [Pei-let] – would you not have given this weirdo even money so that he would go on with his naïve love-message?

Our gospel text today proves why Jesus was not the naïve weirdo, but high-dangerous for the religious and political authorities. Jesus' message has nothing lost of its sharpness. I trust you that you will draw your own conclusions.

Only at few places in the New Testament the discrepancy [dis-**crä**-pencie] between religious inwardness and religious-political system is so clear like in these scenes, which Matthew adopts from the original in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the gospel of Marc. The verses 1-20, the first half of our 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, show Jesus as a prophetic figure in his fight against a hardened, soulless and oppressing religiousness. The second part of the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, the verses 21-31 demonstrate the therapeutic dimension of Jesus' appearance.

Already before the incidents of our story happen has Jesus already raised suspicion. Since he forgave in chapter 9 sins while healing a paralyzed each step Jesus does is a new confrontation and provocation of the Pharisee. Now they start to get interested officially in Jesus. From Jerusalem they sent the super religious, the hard-core theologians. And prompt they catch Jesus red-handed: His disciples eat bread without having had washed their hands before.

You would think it is a pure question of manners or gastronomic culture. But for Jesus it is much more. From a specific point of view there are two groups within society: The wealthy and the ones without so many privileges [**prí**-vil-id-sches]. For some people it is worse to

eat fish with fork and knife than injustice through people in white or black robes. For some people the etiquette [éti-ket] is more important than anything else. For other people again fashion is primary. The rules change regularly – sometimes it is en vogue for women to wear the chest even, sometimes for men to wear the trouser legs narrow. To follow the always-changing rules of fashion is expensive. And discounters were unknown at that time.

Jesus acting and talking is nothing else than a revolt against the established circles in religion and society in the name of those, who never learned to use a napkin for cleaning the mouth, but the back of the hand, and those, who don't have enough water in their households to execute the ritual washings. It is Jesus message and will: Social distinctions are no human distinctions. For the establishment it is a scandal: Not only that here somebody stooped to the proletarians, Jesus confesses even his solidarity with them. He simply refuses to become a social climber; he decides to stay side by side with the unclean and "non-civilized".

It is easy to talk about Jesus as a prophet or son of God. But here lies the whole seriousness; It doesn't matter how many prophets we can count in the history of religion; the question is if we are courageous enough to speak and act as prophets ourselves!

We have qualified the prophetic dimension in the sense that we experience the message of Jesus often as something historical, distanced.

Authority and tradition are often used to limit human freedom. For Jesus nothing is valid as long it is not checked up on its consequence for the people. Nobody has the right to judge over people, who simply CAN'T keep a specific law. Who wants to judge somebody, who steals because of hunger?

In the 18 hundreds the church lost the people, who worked in manufactories and mines, as the poverty, the exploitation, the 14 hours work-days in the mines without any social security, the Manchester capitalism left no room for a worship as the church asked for. The difference between the white minister robes and the simple clothing of the working class men and women had become grotesque. The speaking of God supported and justified oppression – instead of helping to resurrect the dignity of people.

Jesus challenged his society and challenges US by requesting: Stop to promulgate [pró-mulgaeit] top-down! Start thinking from bottom-up from the perspective of the most suffering. Start thinking from the perspective of the person, who has to leave a job because it doesn't offer health-care. Start to think from the perspective of a mother, who has to go back to her job instead of taking care about her newborn – because she would loose her job. Start thinking from the perspective

of the 67yo man or woman, who still has to go working as his or her pension is not enough – despite 50 years of hard working. Jesus message is as simple as rebellious. Who ever starts' thinking from the perspective of people –not profit!- has a good chance to reach God.

Everything what we share with real emotion, everything what makes the eyes of the person close to us shine, everything what opens his or her mouth because of joy – all this breaths God, sees God.

The own apostles start to warn Jesus: *'Do you know that the Pharisees took offence when they heard what you said?'* But typically for Jesus he rather broadens the conflict. With starting from the innocent, the weak, the needy, Jesus revolutionizes religion – and universalizes it towards everything, which is human.

Let us have finally a look at two aspects of our text, which seems to be mysterious at first glance: First, what does it mean in verse 19 <sup>19</sup>*For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander?* Isn't the heart the place where all good comes from? And second, how do we explain the meeting with the Canaanite woman?

*"Murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander"* – all this, says Jesus, comes out of the heart. But it is the heart itself, which

needs help. It is not moral and it not tradition which can straighten a person – the heart itself needs to be straightened. ... Examples:

Murder: A man has committed a serious crime. It is easy to judge him just by looking at him from outside. But what when we learn that this person tried contrariwise his whole life to please everybody, tried to read the wishes of others from their lips while oppressing his whole life the own feelings and needs? And at one point the pot just exploded. He was truly only helpless, had never learned to develop an own self-confidence and ability to argue for himself.

Adultery: How many sidesteps or divorces happen, not because of simple lust, but defective communication between the couple. How often the relationship has not been developed to a safe place, in which feelings and conflicts can be discussed. Who wants to judge, when the true needs of body, heart and soul get disconnected within a hallow sense of duty?

Fornication. Here the same: Aside from pure lust, how often do men and women try to forget their liveness in the arms of an escort or prostitute?

Theft: A woman gets arrested as shoplifter. Her reputation is destroyed, the whole village laughs about her. And this though she had enough money and didn't need to steal at all. How would you judge, if you knew that she was since childhood never allowed to

fulfill even her smallest wish and that she learned from childhood on that the only way to fulfill a wish was to take it backdoor, thievishly. How do we heal a heart of a person until it can accept its own wishes WITHOUT the need to steal?

Finally “false witness & slander”: Why do we lie? Isn’t it often fear? Yes, but also because of the refraction of our own character. And, probably, also in most cases the abundant meaning, which we attribute to our environment.

This is Jesus’ answer to Peter’s question to explain the parable: Everything, which is lively, is from God. And reverse: What ever is from God, will prevail in life and INTO life.

It is this plea contra fear and pro life, which Matthew tells us in this dramatic story of the Canaanite mother. Representing all the mothers who don’t know further in the education of their child. She, only she is responsible. This is her feeling. But we can understand today psychoanalytically that she might internalize in her anxiety to her child, this child so much, that it seems to her as if it would be possessed by a demon. On the other side can the choking love of the mother restrain a teenage girl from own thinking and living for herself, to be herself.

Nine chapters earlier Jesus taught his disciples the Lords’ Prayer’ and therewith “Your will be done.” Now he uses the same words, but

this time the woman's will is done. After Jacob at the Jabbok again a human being can get in its despair God, and here even Jesus to follow. With this story Jesus' way to the nations, the non-Jews starts.

Today the story has reached us. Now it is up to us to help God still speaking in our times and world – for more humanity, bottom-up.

AMEN.