

Tension

Bob Harper

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God created the great diversity within humanity as to embody His image through unity. This is something to celebrate. But it is also the source of tension.

Did Jesus provide guidance for navigating this tension?

Verse 21:

- Jesus goes to the non-Jewish area to the north “Syrophenicia.”
- The Phoenicians were a seafaring people likely related to the Greeks.
- Josephus called them “the bitterest enemies.”

Verse 22:

- A woman of the area comes to Jesus begging Him to heal her daughter.
- Remarkably, she calls Jesus by a Messianic title indicating she knows who he is.
- Matthew calls her a “Canaanite” but we know from Mark that she was really a Syrophenician (Mk.7.26)

Verses 23-25:

- Jesus at first ignores her. Then he says he is only to help the “lost sheep of Israel.”
- Finally, he calls her a dog.
- What is Jesus doing? He is exposing the latent racism in the disciples.

Verse 27:

- The woman deftly owns Jesus’s insult. Jesus responds by praising her faith and doing what she asked.

Lessons learned:

1. Don’t objectify people.
2. Listen.
3. Seek to understand before seeking to be understood.
4. Be aware of the power differential encoded in our age.