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After hearing the reading of Genesis and the Gospel of Matthew I wouldn't be surprised if some of us wish to see ourselves in the latter not the former. In both scriptures, Joseph and Jesus face similar situations. If we take this week's lectionary as stand-alone scripture there might be an urge to compare Joseph's actions to Jesus's actions; it might even make sense to pull what the message should be this week from what was just presented. We can summarize neatly: While Joseph was ruling in Egypt his family appeared during a seven-year famine. Joseph, recognizing his brothers, offer care to them and his father. This scripture illustrates a societal norm of taking care of family. We are taught to take care of our family and care for our family. While hearing today's reading from Matthew some of us might want to shame Jesus for how he acts towards the Canaanite woman. Our church supports tolerance and acceptance which is difficult to find in this piece. Even adding in the fact that biblically the Canaanites were pagans, who were polytheists, and who did not worship the "I am" as the only "I am" may not be enough. This piece of information may add some clarity of Jesus's hesitation but we may want to go "but surely this is Jesus! He can look past that".

Some of us may want more facts on why this story doesn't align with our understanding of Jesus's teachings. We are intuitive, curious, people who make judgments with every opinion formed. We form opinions on what information is presented to us and we change our opinions more than once and often. The "I am" knows this and that is part of the definition of free will.

We may not want to dwell on this scripture. We could have even skipped it entirely. At first blush, I was able to understand Joseph's charity towards family much easier than Jesus actions toward the Canaanite woman. This scripture not the best example of the teachings that Jesus loves everyone; this scripture provided information on Jesus's humanity.

Humanity was formed by oral history, later recorded in written form by hand, and now more often typed into electronic form. We of course still control what information is delivered which affects another person's opinion. I can share my life on Facebook and re-post in following years. My story may be taken out of context but it is vital information in my opinion. If I really have the urge to find out what is going on with a public figure I can google. In a few swift clicks, I can obtain all the news I need. If more of an insight is needed there is commentary articles archiving the tweet way past relevancy. We can imagine Joseph and Jesus having a twitter account if it existed back then. Scripture summarized in 140 characters or less:

"Woman in search of care for her sick daughter; Jesus hesitates to help concerned over tribal lines and town politics. Child ultimately saved. "

"Prince Joseph has reunion with estranged family. Family is offered monarchy refugee status amidst announcement that famine continue for five more years."

I will admit that last piece of news I did need to shorten to make that fit into 140 characters or less.

For those who don't know much about twitter, or the few people who haven't heard of twitter at all, Twitter is a mix between an online chat and Facebook. The rule of this platform is that the person is required to send a message in 140 characters, including spaces, or less. It's sincerely hard to deliver any message in a tweet. We could really take this one step further, combining two tweets, and bringing the message into one:

Mt 15 20-28 & Gen 45 1-15 Jesus v. Joe. Follow in their footsteps. Do the right thing accept others. Flow grace, mercy & love. Peace be w/u

According to my "review" option on Microsoft Office I just said 28 words in 139 characters. I am guilty of using proper grammar and punctuation. I can admit, old habits die-hard, and I find at least periods help me understand tweets better. Reflecting on some of the conversation I have at church about my generation and the buzz phrase "post-modern" I am sure many of us are thankful that I don't speak in "tweets". In fact, if I had decided to speak the good news in tweets today I assure you most of you would be wondering if you had skipped a beat.

Fortunate or not we cannot, at least presently, obtain the theme and message that lectionary is presenting to us this week via Twitter. Translating the Gospel of Matthew 15:21-28 into text that substituted certain words for pictures or symbols, otherwise known in computer geek speak as "Emojis", I decided not to reference them today. A few of the sentences were pretty difficult to read; I decided to stick with the tried and true practice of opening my bible.

Genesis and Matthew reads differently. This happened on purpose, there are stylistic differences, yet we are asked to make an informed opinion. The stories in Genesis are stories that span, in the case of Joseph and his Brethren, over thirteen chapters and is considered a narrative. A narrative is a bible story that can spanned through many chapters of a book. We have just heard part of the narrative this week but really it could be considered the series finale part 1 of 2 of a 12-episode season. We've missed all of the conflict, building of the characters, understanding alliances. As "what happened before this" recap Joseph was given a coat of many colors from his father. He started having dreams of his potential time in power and decided to share these dreams with his family. His brothers, after hearing these dreams, made the ultimate decision that the best way to handle this conflict was to leave Joseph in a ditch in the wilderness. Joseph, who eventually rose to power in Egypt, found himself faced with this family. Remembering the fact that his brothers left him a ditch he decided to frame his brothers for stealing.

The Gospel of Matthew is partially made up short stories and parables. They are used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. In this case the beginning, middle, and an end happened within eight verses. We might wonder what the conversation was when they first spotted the Canaanite woman. Had they ever seen her around town before? Was this a reaction to information the disciples and Jesus had been given about this person's tribal connection? Whatever the case may be they acted upon an opinion formed by past information.

Our judgment call on who we should act like, Joseph or Jesus, has become more complicated. For those who need more information than I can deliver right now, and still get us out at a reasonable time today, I suggest reading the story of Joseph even more when you get home. I am hand delivering you information myself, providing you with my opinion, with a real possibility that I may be biased.

Somehow, as the modern age has developed electronic means of receiving information, we are liable to missing a piece of a story, or a fact, in a story. Perhaps the modern-day parable will be a tweet but is that the best way of understanding the narrative of our past? We can even lose more information when we put a limit on forming an opinion through two or three simple statements right after a headline or a tweet. Like many of you I was disturbed last weekend while watching what happened in Charlottesville and this weekend in Boston and New York City. When I watched what was happening I wondered what I had missed. What causes someone to act in this way towards other human beings. We cannot place these events, a piece of a longer narrative, into the size of a parable or a tweet.

The narrative of this story begins at the beginning of the 15th century when slave trade was used as a solution, for better or for worse, to build an economy. As a way of fighting against the oppression an alternative form of communication was developed. This was created as a grassroots movement to fight back against the violence, destruction of family units, and the diminishment of identities. Using oral history was unsafe so a system of coded messages was developed. Through quilt symbols, songs, and a creation of a common language communication happened. Information on what was considered “forbidden topics” became more possible; these forbidden topics included freedom, health, and news that alerted the “chosen families” of the plantations of danger.

At the time of the ratification of Vermont’s Constitution the Republic of Vermont sought to create a state which believed authority is derived from the people. In the Vermont Constitution the authorities to be prohibited slavery. Our constitution states, “All subjects of the commonwealth, of whatever color, are equally entitled to the inestimable blessings of freedom.” Our state's history includes having stops on the underground railroad in Ferrisburgh, Shaftsbury, and East Montpelier. A piece of hidden history is that we elected the first African American to hold public office. Alexander Lucius Twilight, educated and a graduate of Middlebury College in 1823, was a congregational preacher who lead services in Waltham and Ferrisburgh in 1828. In 1836 he was elected as a state legislator and was the only person of color to serve before the civil war in the country. Despite living up to our progressive views, we still have slavery in Vermont’s history. The infamous Ethan Allen, who was responsible for buying land grants that helped develop what we now know as Vermont, died in the company of his black farmhand named Newport. Among the listed occupants of the Allen household was also a young black woman named Eliza and her mother. A letter from Levi Allen gives proof of a purchase of a slave named Prince and Lucy Allen, Ethan’s daughter, had slaves working for her for six years in Burlington.

December 9, 1860, a mere 4 months before the Civil War officially started, the Third Congregational Church of Burlington, known as College Street Church, held their first service.

Among the original 52 members were three participants of the underground railroad. Their mission was to bring free-thinkers and activists together on the issues of slavery and women's rights. Civil War General Oliver Howard, who attended this church in the mid 1800's, worked for the rights of former slaves and established Howard University serving as president from 1867-1873. Perhaps we have missed a beat here, understanding the history of the congregational churches in Burlington, and I am sure we would have some clarifying questions about those discussions that our ancestors had. Like Joseph, who was reunited with his family, attempts were made in 1931 to merge with the Unitarian Universalist Church, our church, and College Street Church. The vote came out as a tie and the topic was eventually dropped. However, we are known for taking care of each other in times of crisis and providing when we can.

Sometimes we don't have a choice on the information found in historical records; it is our experiences and we must walk with them every day. While I was attending the United Church of Christ General Synod this past July I had the honor of speaking to lay leader who has overseen some of the functions of our national church. She spoke about her experiences attend Talladega College, a graduate in the 1967 class. She attended Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama during the civil rights era. It was almost dangerous to get off the train but the risks were taken for education. If we were there with the Canaanite woman, in the gospel of Matthew, would we have saw her stand on the side, watching, wondering if she should even attempt the risk to gain his attention, while no one noticed her? Would we have noticed her for anything more than someone who was bothering us at the time?

Some of us may ask ourselves if we want to adopt Joseph's view of family or follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Have we thrown in the condition if we follow in the footsteps of Jesus we will only follow in his footsteps of verse 28. "Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.' In retrospect, this may make most of our church meetings go rather quickly and an instant, fix-all solution will appear. Our church's history, that spans over 200 years, dictates that we have a narrative full of family dynamics, celebrations, and conflict. Joseph and his Brethren isn't something unusual or among the few dysfunctional. We can seek comfort in this week's scripture from Genesis knowing that when we pull together we can overcome obstacles and grow our understanding about those who are different from us. Our Church family is affected by every individual's opinion which plays into how we interact and deal with conflict. It is constantly changing with more information we receive and process.

How do we process this information? Some of us may wonder how we apply the information we have perceived. Dust off the moral compasses that have been passed down as a tradition from one generation to another. Maybe you've decided to upgrade so perhaps it is time to turn the power button on for the models of the "technology-infused" moral compass; For those who have taken it another step forward open the package of the newest version of a religious GPS. We may find ourselves searching social media to ask the probing questions of what happened in Charlottesville and yesterday in Boston and New York. While others listen to today's reading's searching for the answers. The reality is we are at a place where an infinite number of opinions are at our finger tips and where there are infinite ways of utilizing or "uploading" the moral

compass we are using. Perhaps at this juncture we should set our compass, or GPS, on the path that Joseph and his brothers find themselves on while planning to meet Jesus and learn from his interaction with the Canaanite Woman.