
Rite of Passage Recognition Service 2017

Today is the Sunday we annually set aside to recognize our Rite of Passage participants. I look forward to this day each year, because our young people are so special to me. Counting this year's group, we have now had **89 young adults** go through Rite of Passage over the last **Ten years** (since 2008). I'm absolutely ecstatic about that!

What is ROP? It's simply a tool from Scripture, which points to a journey that is designed to move our children from childhood to young adulthood. It's a “raising of the bar of expectations.” Because children will rise to our level of expectations as adults. The model for ROP comes from Luke chapter 2. You remember Jesus in the Temple? He was 12 years of old and yet, He knew exactly where he was headed in life and the ultimate purpose and goal of His life. He said “Didn't you know I had to be about my Father's business?” We know Jesus is our example in all things, and in all stages of life and that includes 12 year olds and becoming a young adult.

We also learn from Luke 2 that Jesus was “submissive to His parents” and the Bible says He “grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and men.” And so we follow Jesus' example today. Thus, here at MPBC, at the age of 12 (and up to 18), you can participate in our annual ROP here at the church.

1 Corinthians 13:11

¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

ROP indicates that according to Scripture, a young adult is expected to act like “young adults” and to behave accordingly. It means they are expected to accept accountability for mature actions and to assume greater responsibilities. Why? Because we know maturity does not necessarily come with age, but with the **acceptance** and **ownership** of increased accountability and responsibility.

This year these **14 young adults** have successfully completed a rigorous gauntlet of questions that had them digging in the Bible for hours. This morning, we would like to recognize this year's Rite of Passage participants and I'd like for them to come forward, along with their families to the front as I call their names. **(You will notice please...some are going to be in the other services...not all are here for this service. Those here for this service will come forward.)**

First Service

1. Clara Brown
2. Ty Bryan
3. Landon Church
4. Sara Kathryn Dowell
5. Carson Edmiston

Second Service

6. Julianna Cordray
7. Emma Golds

Third Service

8. Olivia Eller
9. Sophie Nichols

- 10. Kailey Perry
 - 11. Hope Poteat
 - 12. Tori Teague
 - 13. Jared Whittington (14. Kacie Cardwell-vacation)
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These fine young adults have fulfilled the principles set forth in Scripture to be considered young adults by completion of this journey. I'd like for them now to have an opportunity to accept an **oath of their commitment** to follow the Lord as a young adult. I'm going to read this oath of commitment from the certificate that we gave them last night at the banquet we had celebrating their accomplishment.

“Today in the presence of my family, my church and my God, I commit to put behind me childish ways and serve the Lord with His leading and guidance as a young adult. I agree to follow the teaching of Scripture as Paul told Timothy in...

1 Timothy 4:12:

¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

We are now going to show you a short video from this year's participants as they share about what ROP meant to them.

Isn't that cool! We are so proud of these young adults! And I know the families are as well. Parents it is wonderful to proclaim about our children:

3 John 4

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

So parents, we rejoice with you today as your young adult journeys from this "ROP" into adulthood and now we will celebrate that accomplishment with a **ceremonial "passing of the baton."**

The baton represents Jesus Christ, the Word of God and the principles of being a disciple of Christ and the family is passing this baton to their young adult. The parents are responsible for making this happen, not the church. We come alongside to help, but these young adults have been given to their parents and it's the parents who are to steward their children spiritually. So, we have this baton...and we've all seen track races and we know how critical the baton pass is. If the baton is dropped, that team is disqualified automatically from the race.

Fathers and mothers... we are called to pass our faith to our children so that they will in turn pass their faith in Christ to their children. So now, as our young adults face forward and reaches back, would you now pass the baton to your young adult. Young adult...don't look back...keep looking forward and hold that baton high...**What great symbolism!!**

We have just witnessed the passing of the baton of Faith in Jesus Christ. And in so doing I want to ask this question for our consideration: **What does it mean to have faith?** What does faith look like? This morning we're going to see what Jesus described as GREAT FAITH. The title of this morning's message is: "The Power of Faith."

Matthew 15:21-28

²¹And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Jesus said to the woman, "O woman, great is your faith," and it was her faith...great faith...that unleashed the power of Jesus to heal her daughter and change their lives forever.

Faith... GREAT FAITH

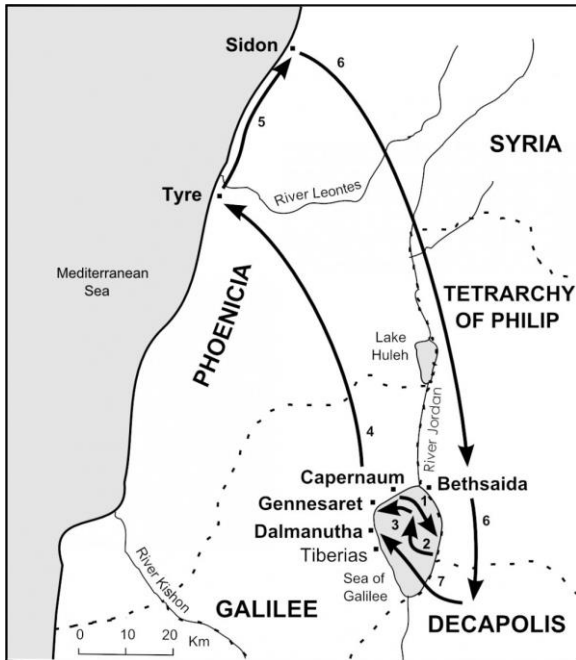
You know the Bible talks about all kinds of "faith." It speaks of little faith, weak faith, abiding faith, bold faith, rich faith, obedient faith, steadfast faith, dead faith, precious faith, common faith, working faith, and twice in the New Testament "Great Faith." Here in chapter 15 and back in Matthew chapter 8.

Do you remember when Jesus told the centurion that he had great faith for believing that Jesus could heal his paralyzed servant by just "saying the word?" Jesus said to him, "I have not found so great a faith in all Israel." Do you remember why this was such a big deal? It was because the man was a Roman and that meant he was a Gentile and that's what this woman is, because Jesus is no longer in the Jewish territory of Galilee. See verse 21.

Matthew 15:21

²¹And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

Take a look at this map.



Jesus has left Galilee and gone into Gentile territory in the area of Phoenicia and Syria, which was often called: "Syro-Phoenicia," and the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

Now why has Jesus gone there? Well, you'll remember, He has started now His third year of His 3-year ministry and that final year is often called: "The Year of Withdrawal." Jesus would spend the last year of His life on earth pouring into His disciples the teaching and truths they would need to lead the Church when He left the earth.

I want you to turn now to Mark 7, verse 24, which is the companion account of this passage and we'll see this "withdrawal" even more clearly. Jesus is going to travel 35 miles to Tyre from Capernaum (Sidon is 50 miles from Capernaum). Mark records this:

Mark 7:24

²⁴ And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden.

Listen, Jesus needed time to teach and to be alone with His disciples and His gone into someone's house. Remember, He was so popular in Galilee that He couldn't get away from the people. Every time He tried that followed Him like groupies following a Rock Star. He was also being dogged by the Pharisees, who were now openly trying to kill Him, because Jesus has ripped off the mask of their hypocrisy by telling them that they were nothing but a bunch of religious fakes! And so, Jesus is REALLY killing two birds with one stone by getting out of Galilean territory and going to the Gentile territory of Syro-Phoenicia...he's getting away from the groupies, who just want food and the Pharisees, who are trying to kill Him.

All is well, right? Nope! Just like your life and mine...things don't always turn out exactly the way we plan them to... Jesus is going to be bugged by a lady with a sick daughter. **Go back to Matthew 15, verse 22.**

Matthew 15:22-23

²² And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us."

Does this seem mean to you? Here this lady has tracked Him down to some house, and yet **Jesus doesn't even say a word to her!!** "Come on Jesus! Why aren't you being more loving!" Even His disciples came to Him and said, "Lord, you need to do something. She's making a scene!"

So, what's Jesus' deal. He's just stone-faced. She's politely calling Him by His Jewish title: "Son of David." She's obviously heard all the way up here about Jesus and His power. But...she's a Canaanite woman! A Canaanite! Those were the people that the Children of Israel had to conquer when they took back the Promised Land. The Canaanites have been enemies of the Jews for centuries! So, that must be it! That's why Jesus is saying nothing and it's why the disciples are begging Him to send her away! A CANAANITE! A FOREIGNER! AN ENEMY! That's got to be it! Well, let's see...

Matthew 15:24

²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Oh man that's cold! Jesus seems to be going right along with His disciples! In essence saying: "Sorry lady...you're not one of us! I was only sent to my people...the HOUSE OF ISRAEL. Nope! You get no help! You're not one of us!"

Is that what Jesus is saying? No! Jesus came to seek and save that which is lost and remember what He's doing in this last year of His life... He's teaching His disciples. And they're watching and they have to be wondering: What's He gonna do with this Canaanite woman...an enemy of our nation...the nation of Israel? By Jesus' response to the woman they must be thinking, "**Good! He's going to get rid of her...this foreigner...this Canaanite...this enemy...she deserves nothing.**"

Church, Jesus is teaching. It's true that it wasn't His main intention to come to Syro-Phoenicia to minister, but Jesus is going to use this "interruption" as a teachable moment. (*Hey church, those interruptions that will come this week in your life could be the Lord's way of trying to use you to help somebody. Keep that in mind, when they come this week.*)

You see, it's true, Jesus had come to His own people first...the nation of Israel, the Jewish people. They got a shot at the Gospel first. But, the religious leaders and many of the Jews have walked away from Jesus and now His disciples are intently watching to see what Jesus is going to do with this Gentile woman.

Matthew 15:25

²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Oh folks, this is so heart-wrenching! She kneels down and calls Him (not Son of David)...NO...she calls Him: "LORD." The Greek word is: KURIOS and it means Sovereign Master! Do you realize what she was affirming before Jesus and those disciples in that house? Jesus is the Messiah! Here's a Gentile woman calling Jesus the Messiah!!! WOW!! So, now SURELY Jesus will help her!

Wrong!

Matthew 15:26

²⁶ And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Oh my...He didn't say what I thought He said, did He? Did Jesus just call this woman a dog? That's what Jews called Gentiles...dogs! (**This is getting embarrassing**...I'm turning red in the face for **how rude Jesus is being** to this momma of a desperately sick child.)

But remember...who is Jesus teaching? His disciples and they're all Jews and this Canaanite lady is part of a nation of people who have been the sworn enemies of Israel for centuries. I can see some of the disciples now looking at each other after Jesus said, "It is not right to take the children's bread [our bread] and throw it to dogs," as they smirk and whisper "LET HER HAVE IT, JESUS!" **That's right JESUS! The Gospel is just for us!** Just for the nation of Israel! Let her have it Jesus! You remind her WHO she is and who WE ARE! (Does that sound like the Pharisees? Yes...Jesus is teaching...)

Oh church, it's another tense scene. Her this lady is on the floor begging! She's weeping and crying! Why? Because her daughter is possessed by a demon. Matthew described her daughter as being "severely oppressed." It literally means in the Greek that her daughter was "under the power of a demon." The word "severely" that's used means: "to be beyond misery."

You might ask, "**Just how old was the daughter?**" Take a look at Mark 7:25 on the screens:

Mark 7:25

²⁵ But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.

"Little daughter." That term in the Greek means: "small child." Folks, this is so sad. Can you imagine a 4 or 5-yr-old little girl that's demon possessed. *Come on Jesus-have some pity on her!*

Oh...Jesus has compassion...He has pity and Jesus as He had shown that to the Gentile, Roman Centurion's paralyzed, servant boy, He'll do the same here. You see, Jesus is trying to teach and invoke compassion to His disciples. **He's pushing this lesson to the point of cruelty** to show them how insensitive and uncaring that even Believers can be because people don't look like us or act like us or talk like us or dress like us or _____ you fill in the blank.

Church family, I can see Jesus now looking at His disciples in that room like... "How far do you want me to push this..." Aren't you red in the face yet? **Don't you feel the heat and the hair rising on the back of your neck?** I mean, hasn't this lady called Him "Lord." Isn't that what salvation is: "For whosoever calls on the name of the Lord." WHOSOEVER! Hasn't she shown faith even though she is Canaanite!!

Hasn't this lady believed? Sure she has! And she won't take NO for answer! Watch!

Matthew 15:27

²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Wow! She's still so polite by calling Him: "Lord," and she takes the analogy that Jesus has used one step further by saying in essence: "Even a good family...we'll give the family dog crumbs from

the table.” In other words, if I’m a dog...I’m willing to eat the crumbs from your family table. Folks, that’s humility, grace and faith if I’ve ever seen it.

Can you see her on the floor of that house looking up at Jesus and asking, “Can you just give me the crumbs of your mercy for my little girl?”

Can you see Jesus looking at His disciples as if to say, “What are we going to do with this humility and this sincere request...she’s a human being...shall I not provide for her the same mercy that I’ve offered to you?”

He’s teaching...do you see this... It’s the transition in His ministry to take the Gospel to all... Watch His response...

Matthew 15:28

²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

And so there it is the power of Great Faith...

Church, who deserves the Gospel? Who deserves mercy? Who deserves Jesus? Anyone...anyone who shows enough faith, repentance and humility to call Jesus: “Lord.” After all, didn’t Jesus say: “Come unto me ALL who labor and are heavy laden...ALL...and I’ll give you rest.”

Who needs the Gospel? It could be your enemy? It could be someone you don’t particular care for? Who needs mercy? It could be another believer who’s been struggling, but they’re now trying to come back to Jesus. Will you offer them mercy?

Hey, the person who needs the Gospel could be you? Have you fallen on your knees and called Jesus: “Lord?” Have you owned your faith? Have you taken the baton? Will you run with it or drop it?

One last question: If Jesus were to be standing here today in front of you and He looked at you, how would He describe your faith? What would He say? Would He be able to say the same thing He said to the Canaanite woman? “Great is your faith?”

Oh, may that be our desire and our prayer today. “The Power of Great Faith.”
