**“I have been sent only to those lost sheep, the people of Israel”** (Matthew 15.24)

There are some passages in the gospels that cause problems – cursing the fig tree, **“love your enemies”**, **“I did not come to bring peace [to the world], but a sword”** (Matthew 10.34), “**you must be perfect – just as your Father in heaven is perfect”.**

But our passage gets to the heart of a deep problem in our understanding of Jesus as God.

Main thing to note is that Jesus is outside of territory associated with Judaism (Tyre & Sidon were 30-50 miles NW of Lake Galilee). There would have been Jews in Tyre and Sidon, but this woman does not seem to have known them.

She hears about a healer, and addresses him in appropriate terms (O Lord, son of David). She looks for healing, not a new religion & eventually her faith & persistence are rewarded.

But there are issues.

[1] Jesus at first ignores her (and his disciples begged him to send her away)

[2] Jesus tells her his ministry is not to gentiles like her (TEXT)

[3] Jesus effectively calls her a dog (derogatory like modern use of the word ‘bitch’)

Does not seem to put Jesus in a good light to modern ears.

Often explained as Jesus testing (teasing?) her, but this feels like a way round the problem. But her undoubted faith did impress Jesus.

Could it be that she helped Jesus see his ministry as broader than just to Jews? This feels uncomfortable, as though Jesus needed ‘perfecting’, but however seems more accurate.

Whatever, the early church soon embraced gentiles, especially those sympathetic to Judaism. We are inheritors of this embracing.

If Jesus is God (as we believe) then why did God initially ignore this woman? Is it that God as Jesus did not know everything? If we say he did know all, how could he be truly human?

Knotty problem, which thankfully we do not have to solve!

We accept the truth, though we cannot fully understand it, and celebrate that in Jesus God came to sort out what we could not sort out (sin, guilt) and lift us back to the Father, and that includes not just the lost sheep of Israel, but us also.