Preaching Series: **Christmas through the Eyes of Others**
Sermon Title: Christmas through the Eyes of Israel

Text: Matthew 15:21-28 -- And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 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." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26 And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Introduction: **Most of us know that many of our Jewish friends do not celebrate Christmas because they have not yet come to recognize Jesus as their Messiah**. (*By the way, just as an aside, those who have placed their faith and trust in Christ are commonly referred to as Messianic Jews*.) **In fact, 82% of these "unbelieving" Jews have never even purchased a Christmas tree**. Many have even expressed feelings of discomfort when it comes to our very Christian holiday. **One Jewish man with a sense of humor likened it to the moment he accidentally wandered into the women's department at a local clothing store. Of the experience, he said, "I just knew I didn't belong there!"** Some of you might be wondering what these "unbelieving" Jews do while Christians celebrate Christmas. To be honest, I wasn't sure myself, so I looked it up. Here is a list of activities from the website entitled **Judaism 101**: **(1) many go out for Chinese food**. In fact, at her confirmation hearings, **Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan** was asked by a senator where she was on Christmas. She responded, "***You know, like all Jews, I was probably at a Chinese restaurant***"; **(2) others go to Matzah Balls**, which are Jewish singles dances held on Christmas Eve or Christmas night; **(3) some go to movies**. That's why theaters have been traditionally open on Christmas day; **(4) still others get together with family or just go to work**. Not all miss out on the celebration either. **Take this story, for example:** After Christmas vacation, an elementary school teacher was asking her students how they celebrated Christmas. When she got to Sammy, whose father ran a local toy store, she said, "***Sammy, since you're Jewish, I guess your family didn't celebrate Christmas***." Sammy replied, "***Oh, yes, we did! We all held hands and danced around the cash register singing, "What a Friend We Have In Jesus***."

This is our final message in the series, **Christmas through the Eyes of Others**. So far, we've looked at **Christmas through the Eyes of the Prophet, Isaiah** (**7:14 – He shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**); **Christmas through the Eyes of the Father** (The Jews denied Christ. The world was divided over Christ; People were left with a choice -- to live in darkness of come to the light of Christ); **Christmas though the Eyes of the Angels** (They saw a humble cast of characters; the unfolding plan of God; and the awesome glory of God); and, of course, Christmas through the Eyes of Christ (He saw a crib, a cross and a crown). **This morning, I want to look, NOT AT WHAT ISRAEL SAW, BUT WHAT ISRAEL SHOULD HAVE SEEN when Christ came into our world.** So, turn to **Matthew 15** in your Bibles, and let's consider a conversation that Jesus had with a Canaanite woman to **see what our Lord wanted His fellow Jews to know about His first advent into our world**. Let's start with this.

Christ came from the Jews (**Matthew 15:21-22 -- And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 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"**). Tyre and Sidon were Phoenician cities. They were not a part of Israel. Jesus had traveled to the area, and that is where He met a desperate woman whose daughter had come under the attack of a demonic spirit. **This woman, who happened to be a Gentile, by the way, came to Jesus and referred to Him as the long-awaited Son of David.**

Now set aside her motive for seeking out Christ and focus on what she must have known about Israel's Messiah. **It must not have been a well-kept secret that the Scriptures testified to the coming of God's Anointed One**. In **1 Chronicles 17:12-14** – **God says to David about his son, Solomon** -- **He is the one who will build a house for me (which Solomon did), and I will establish his throne forever." God is not talking about Solomon in the second half of this verse because he died. He had to be talking about one of his descendants. Of this person, God says: "I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor (King Saul). I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.'" This is the one who would be known as the Son of David. *EVERY 1st CENTURY JEW ANTICIPATED HIS COMING, ESPECIALLY THE PHARISEES* -- Matthew 22:41-42 -- Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David."** It was well enough known that even a Canaanite woman was privy to the coming of the Son of David. The Gospel of Matthew (***written to the Jews as an apologetic for Christ***) uses the title **ten times** in reference to our Lord! WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN? ***Think of it as a huge neon sign that points to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah or "Anointed One" who, as a Jew, had come to set Israel free and reign over all peoples.*** **He was the One in whom they should have placed their hope as a nation, an Israelite who could trace his heritage to King David and even to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation**. Note that the Gospel begins in **Matthew 1:1 … A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham**. **Review: What should the Jews have seen in the advent of our Lord? The same thing the Canaanite woman saw … HE WAS HIMSELF A JEW FROM THE LINE OF DAVID.**

Christ came first to the Jews (**Matthew 15:23-24 -- 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." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"**). In Mark's version of the same story found in **Mark 7:27,** we're told that Christ came FIRST for the Jews -- **Mark 7:27 -- And Jesus said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.**" The Apostle Paul proclaims the priority of Israel in **Romans 1:16 -- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS? Before the Gospel was ever offered to the Gentile nations, Christ brought it to His countrymen**. Even in **Acts 1:8**, when Christ spoke of the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit that would come upon His followers, they were expected to witness first to those living in Jerusalem and Judea! **Listen to these words from our Lord in Matthew 23:37 to have some sense of how much our Lord loved His fellow Jews -- "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings…" These are words of great compassion that Jesus spoke to His fellow Jews**. ***They were the first priority in the establishment of His kingdom, though certainly not His only priority***.

It feels good to be on the top of someone else's list, doesn't it? The awareness that you're the number one choice of someone really means a lot. I can remember as a kid in grade school playing in pick-up kickball games during recess at school. Usually, our teacher would appoint two captains who would then select their teams. Since I wasn't big or strong, I was never picked to be a captain, which of course meant that I had to stand in line and wait to see if either captain selected me. It was the worst feeling if I was one of the few remaining hopefuls after all the good players had been picked through. **Why do I mention this? To help you understand that what God was saying through His Son to His people was that they were His first pick! Review: What should the Jews have seen in the advent of our Lord? HE CAME FROM THE JEWS, AND HE CAME FIRST TO THE JEWS.**

Christ came to bless the Jews (**Matthew 15:25-26 -- But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26 And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs"**). The term

"**children**" refers to Israel, and "**bread**" to the blessings of God on the Jews. The word that our Lord used to describe Gentiles (**dogs**) was used for a domestic pet that was allowed to eat food under the children's table, and therefore, implied affection. But again, it is clear that the children get **the first portion**. **That's WHY the disciples were first sent to the house of Israel by our Lord in Matthew chapter ten. And look what they were commanded to do according to verses seven and eight -- And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. THEY WERE COMMISSIONED TO BLESS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE BY ALLEVIATING THEIR SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL SUFFERING.**

Did you know that God's heart has always been for the Jews? He has continued to bless them despite their current rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. A while ago, I read that 22% of the people who received Nobel Prizes from 1901-2025 were Jews, even though the population of Israel is the same as that of the state of New Jersey. In fact, ONE FOURTH of all the organizations that have ever received a Nobel Prize were founded by Jews. Did you know that Israel has the third-best-performing economy in the world and that the Bank of Israel is among the most stable Central Banks worldwide, though it was only established in 1954? Have you ever considered that this tiny country, which is only slightly larger than the state of New Jersey, continues to exist even though it has been the punching bag for much larger and stronger empires 26 different times (See historycollection.com)? HOW DOES ALL THIS HAPPEN? THE ANSWER IS THAT GOD CHOOSES TO BLESS THEM.

Christ came to bless the world through the Jews (**Matthew 15:27-28 -- She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly**). Unfortunately for Israel, they did not receive Jesus as their Messiah (**John 1:11 -- He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him**). Paul mentions this in **Romans 11:12** and says, however, that their loss meant riches for the Gentiles. **So even though Jesus is having a conversation with a Canaanite (*originally the enemies of the Jews who occupied the Promised Land)*, the woman in this story was granted her request because of her great faith, and her daughter was at that moment delivered from a demon. Never forget that it has always been God's intention to bless the nations by working through Israel** (**Genesis 12:3 -- in you (Abraham) all the families of the earth shall be blessed"**).

In summary, what should Israel have seen in the advent of our Lord? HE CAME FROM THE JEWS, HE CAME FIRST TO THE JEWS, HE CAME TO BLESS THE JEWS, AND HE CAME TO BLESS THE WORLD THROUGH THE JEWS.

Now, here's another question that we, as Christians, should ask ourselves when it comes to the nation of Israel: "**How should we show our love for the Jews**?"

- **Christians should bless them** (**Genesis 12:2-3 -- And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse**). This promise of God is still in effect. We have been blessed by Israel in that our Savior has come from the Jews. We must always work to return the blessing.
- **Christians should pray for them**. We're told in **Psalm 122:6** that we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem, especially in turbulent times such as these. With antisemitism on the rise, and HAMAS advocating the total obliteration of the Jews "**from the river to the sea**," we must stand with them in prayer for their protection.
- **Christians should share Christ with them** (**Romans 10: -- Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them (Israel) is that they may be saved**). Christians are proclaimers of the truth as it is found in the Gospel of Christ. We are called to make disciples of all nations, including Israel. Don't think that our Jewish friends have no interest in talking about Him. It is not the case. **Listen to these words from a rabbi in**

Brooklyn: "**I, Rabbi of Israel, think we should accept Jesus. I think we should teach Jesus to children as much as we teach them about Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, and the rest of the great teachers and prophets. Jesus, as we all know, was a Jew. He preached divine love. He was a gift of love**." There is growing interest in Christ among Jews in our world today. We should capitalize on it and do our best to point them to Him, not simply as a great teacher or prophet, but as Savior and Lord.

Conclusion: **Christmas, Christ's first advent into our world, is as much for the Jews as it is for everyone else. We have become His followers and are called to increasingly depend on Christ as our world grows in its antagonism toward the church. We must also come alongside our Jewish friends and do all we can to help them discover in Jesus their Messiah and Deliverer, especially as they find themselves more alone than ever in our world**. In his book ***When a Nation Forgets God***, **Pastor Erwin Lutzer** retells one Christian's story of living in Hitler's Germany. The man wrote: **I lived in Germany during the Nazi Holocaust. I considered myself a Christian. We heard stories of what was happening to the Jews, but we tried to distance ourselves from it, because what could anyone do to stop it? A railroad track ran behind our small church, and each Sunday morning we could hear the whistle in the distance and then the wheels coming over the tracks. We became disturbed when we heard the cries coming from the train as it passed by. We realized that it was carrying Jews like cattle in the cars! Week after week the whistle would blow. We dreaded to hear the sound of those wheels because we knew that we would hear the cries of the Jews en route to a death camp. Their screams tormented us. We knew the time the train was coming, and when we heard the whistle blow, we began singing hymns. By the time the train came past our church, we were singing at the top of our voices. If we heard the screams, we sang more loudly and soon we heard them no more. Years have passed, and no one talks about it anymore. But I still hear that train whistle in my sleep. God forgive me; forgive all of us who called ourselves Christians yet did nothing to intervene**. **COULD WE AGREE TOGETHER THAT WE WILL NEVER TURN OUR BACKS ON THE PEOPLE FROM WHOM CHRIST CAME TO BRING THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL OF US?**