

Pastor T.C. Arnold
2nd Sunday in Lent
Matthew 15:21-28
March 1st, 2015

All we need are crumbs that fall from the master's table. All we need is a small portion – just a little bit of the greatest sustenance. All we need is the smallest portion of God's grace. That's all we need. A bit of His grace abounds into all eternity.

The Canaanite woman knew that. How did she know? She didn't say that she knew – but she must have – somehow. That's all she desired. That's all she wanted... just a little food that came from the master's table. That's what the dogs get. Essentially the Canaanite woman said, "Even if you treat me like a dog, at least do that. Because then I get some crumbs and that is all I need." And that is all she wanted.

Not us. The world today, us included, has a sense of entitlement. Even when we call out others who believe they are entitled to the things that have never been promised to them, we still hold a sense of it in one way or another. Even if we don't feel as if we think and act that way, we still do. We think, "I've been a faithful Christian, why is God giving me such a difficult circumstance to deal with today. By my faith, I'm entitled." We might think, "I'm a little smarter, I deserve more, I'm more educated, I should be given more, I'm even better looking, I should be considered more..." And it goes on from there. Just a couple of examples.

But even if we only think we deserve a small portion of "entitlement," we actually want so much more. Never are we satisfied with a little. We want the whole enchilada, the whole shooting match, the whole kit and caboodle, the whole nine yards, the whole shebang, the whole hog, the whole ball of wax... we want it all. I get it... if we just get a little that's great, but we want a whole lot more. Our human nature is never satisfied with a little because, when we see others who have more, our coveting juices start flowing – we should be getting more. I think I'm entitled.

Now, I don't want to be misunderstood. I'm not saying this is us in every situation. But it is easy for our hearts to go into this direction because in sinful ways we want more. There is a reason why there is a commandment, "*Thou shall not covet*" because God knows we do. If we are honest with ourselves, we all do in one way or another. Coveting leads to discontent. Discontent leads to us feeling as if we have been shafted by others or even God in one way or another. Not good.

This scene in Matthew chapter fifteen shares how Jesus, on one of His rare occasions, ventures away from Galilee and ministers to the people in a different region. And then, when a person from that region asks for mercy, Jesus has an interesting response. It seemed harsh but it was the truth. Earlier in chapter ten Jesus sends out the twelve and says, "*Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" Jesus had a plan. He had a method of ministry. He would preach first to the people who God made His very own from way back in the days of Abraham. The promise of, "*I will be your God and you will be my people,*" spurred on this model of sharing the Good News. But what we have to keep in mind is that Jesus doesn't leave the Word, the forgiveness and the faith, to just Israel. It is for all. And perhaps this story turns over that leaf. Perhaps here is where the disciples start to see that Jesus is for everyone.

Now, the woman got what she wanted. Her daughter was healed. The disciples got what they needed... to see that Jesus was going to be a Lord of more than just a particular kind of people. And we gain understanding... that God's grace is so big, all we need are the crumbs. Yet, we get so much more than the crumbs we need.

Crumbs are enough but we get more than crumbs. God's grace is so bountiful that a small portion is enough... but we get the whole enchilada, the whole shooting match, the whole shebang, the whole nine yards, the whole ball of wax. We get everything that the Lord went to the cross for. We get all His blood and His sweat and His tears. We get every bit of His love... all of us get that... in

that mysterious way that His love works. You know, you can love your oldest kid with your whole heart. Yet, you can love your middle child and your youngest with whole heart as well. That doesn't seem to make sense, but that is the way it works. All of God's grace is yours. And all of God's grace belongs to your fellow believer as well. It's all for you! You get MORE than you will ever need.

So, beloved, be like the Canaanite woman. Beg the Lord for the crumbs and know that in your request, God gives you the whole kit and caboodle, the whole nine yards... Pray, beloved in the Lord. Pray like the Canaanite woman who gains Jesus' praise for believing that He will help her sick daughter. In time of need, we often either fail to pray with such determination or only ask hesitantly. Instead we ought to "*pray without ceasing,*" as it says in 1 Thessalonians 5. Jesus hears all prayers prayed in His name, in His faith, and will answer in His own way and time. Therefore we can pray with confidence knowing that we are heard. A woman who seemed insignificant was heard. So are you. So pray.

Beloved, allow me to say a couple of things to you about prayer – and maybe use these words in the midst of your Lenten devotionals this year. First of all, it's okay to pray for yourself. You have needs. Take them to the Lord. It says in Hebrews chapter 4, "*We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near (prayer) to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" God knows what we are going through. He's been there and more. Go to Him. He, more than anyone, understands.

Pray for your family, your friends, those who are in need and even your enemies. Take the insert from the Sunday bulletin and pray for those who are listed – the sick, those who are celebrating anniversaries, etc... Maybe even keep a prayer journal of those you would like to keep in your prayers. This way you don't have to rely on your memory. You could even send a note to the person you are praying for. Think how much that would mean to your friend or loved one who receives a little word that someone has taken their name and circumstance to the gates of heaven and conversed about their needs with the Almighty.

Also, pray for your pastors and the staff in this place. We are not entitled to those prayers, but we do need them. We need God's strength and encouragement as much – if not more – than anyone. Pray for me to have the crumbs. I'm a dog. And even the dogs get the crumbs. I need crumbs. So does Pastor Froiland, Deacon, and the teachers down in our Pre-K. All of us here today. Pray for one another. We need what falls from the mater's table.

Beloved, please know that our prayers are never alone. The Lord Himself accompanies them. We pray what He has promised right back to Him. We aren't making up words about mercy that He hasn't already said to us to begin with. Thanks be to God.

And that is exactly what the Canaanite woman tells Jesus. "I understand what you are saying about the lost Children of Israel. But you are a God of mercy. I know that from your own words. So, Lord, have mercy on me," she says. And He does. Her faith is what Jesus saw.

Beloved, in faith our same plea to the Lord of mercy is heard and heeded. It's His promise to us. All we need is a small portion of God's mercy – the crumbs – but we've got it all... the whole shebang, the whole shooting match, the whole 9 yards, the whole kit and caboodle. We've got it all. All of Jesus, all His forgiveness. Yes, even the forgiveness of those sins you think are so horrible. The Lord forgives you. We are not entitled to the grace of God. We deserve it not. But we've got it all. Why? Because Jesus loves you so much. And God keeps His promises. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.