

Pastor T.C. Arnold
2nd Sunday in Lent
Matthew 15:21-28
February 28th, 2010

I have been asked many times, "Pastor, how does one pray? I would like to know how to pray better." A similar question was posed to Jesus by His disciples. As a result, Jesus taught them to pray by giving them a prayer. In other words, He gave them Words. He didn't teach them how to hold their hands or bow their heads. He didn't indicate whether or not their eyes should be open or closed. He didn't tell them whether or not to speak out loud or to pray silently. The way the Lord teaches us to pray is with the content of the Word – nothing else.

The content of the prayer our Lord gives to pray is very important. We use it every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. From the oldest liturgies known to Christendom, the Lord's Prayer is included. We learn the Lord's Prayer from our youth. As a matter of fact our Confirmation kids are learning about right now.

The Lord's Prayer is broken down into seven petitions with an introduction and conclusion in Luther's Small Catechism. The third petition always catches my eye. Of course there is no better prayer than the prayer our Lord has given us. He teaches us "how" to pray in this most important of prayers.

I would like to look at the third petition with you in the Small Catechism. Would you please turn to page 324 in your hymnal and read with me the petition and the first part of the explanation...

How many times have we prayed this petition? And we know from the explanation that "*The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.*" However, when we look at the catechism, it is not the petition and the explanation that fascinates me. What fascinates me is one of the questions that ask, "What does the good and gracious will of God include?" The explicit answer given in our older translation (1943 ed.) of the catechism to me really hits the nail on the head. First it answers by saying, "*Everything that God wants to do for us according to His promise.*" Secondly it says, "*Everything that God wants us to do and to avoid according to His will.*" Thirdly, and most directly – a point that has been emphasized from this pulpit before, "*Everything that God wants us to suffer patiently according to His good pleasure.*"

Right here are the words that tell it all when it comes to waiting. The catechism describes it as suffering patiently. Does that describe patience or what? I would contend that most everyone here this morning knows what it is like to "suffer patiently." These two words "*suffer*" and "*patiently*" go together so well. Suffering can be at times very intimately connected with patience. Whether we are talking about adults or children, patience is not our forte. Even for the most patient people, there is a point where patience wears out.

And because patience is hard to come by, this petition, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" can be at times very difficult to pray – but apparently not for a Canaanite woman. I'm talking about the text appointed by the Church ancient for this the 2nd Sunday in Lent. It's these words that sound anything but comforting from our Lord but rather beckons the Canaanite woman to patience. The text reads, "*The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord help me!' She said. He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.' 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus answered, 'woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour.*"

Aside from this witty reply the woman gave to the Lord, aside from the fact that she was a Canaanite woman and not one of the chosen people of Israel that Jesus points out He came to

minister to first – it was this woman who displayed the kind of “suffering patient” faith that can only be expressed through her response, “Yes, Lord.”

You see, she demonstrated exactly what the catechism says, “suffering patience” when it comes to the third petition, “*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” She was patient with the will of God and demonstrated a faith so profound the Lord knew she was a woman of faith.

The woman’s reaction was unique and displayed a great faith. We would have probably reacted in a much different way – if we are honest with ourselves. I would be angry at being called a dog – a pet – rather than a child. How would have you reacted? You know, we could speculate all we want but off hand I probably would have been pretty mad. Anger may have gotten the best of me. My patience would have really been tested. And the only real thing that I have to go by is the way I have felt when someone has talked to me as someone who is less than a person. My reaction is not a patient one. And I’m going to guess that would not be your first reaction either.

But the Canaanite woman says, “Yes, Lord.” She says, “Yes, Lord.” Can you believe it? She displays a suffering patience for the Lord’s will that goes beyond what so many of us could ever muster. Patience? Yes. Faith? Most definitely! She has faith in those words, “*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” Her great faith gave her the patience to carry on with that great, wonderful, and overlooked two worded response, “Yes, Lord.” She understands, accepts, and consents to the Lord’s will. Wow! That’s hard. Here’s why...

Applied to your life, the Lord can be heard saying, “Today, the suffering will continue.” Is your response, “Yes, Lord?” The Lord is heard saying, “You will continue to be dissatisfied with you job.” Is your response, “Yes, Lord?” The Lord is heard saying, “You will lose your home.” He is heard saying, “There is more bad news on the way.” He is heard saying, “There is no cure.” Do you respond like the Canaanite woman, “Yes, Lord?” Or do you do what seems to come naturally and try to reason with the Lord’s will? “Lord, but please... only if you could do this.” “Lord, no, that’s not the way it is supposed to work. You are supposed to stop the pain and suffering and not let it continue.” “Lord you are supposed to heal the deadly disease and not let this happen.” “Lord, you can’t let that happen.” In times where our faith is challenged and the will of the Lord is not our own, or even make any sense whatsoever for that matter, how do we respond? Do we say, “Yes, Lord” or do we say, “Wait a minute, Lord” or, “That’s not how it is supposed to work, Lord,” or, “No, Lord?”

At times the distress and suffering of this life causes us grief and if Jesus has anything negative to say, well then, we just don’t want to hear it. The Canaanite woman heard something very negative. Jesus said, “I didn’t come for you.” I ask you this: what could be worse than being “shunned” by the Savior? He wrote her off. He told her to go fly a kite. He told her He is not for her. Or did He?

The Lord did not write her off. He did not care more for the Jews more than He did for the Gentiles. Rather, He knows what to say to the woman and how to treat her. He knows what to say to us and how to treat us. He is the perfect parent – even when we aren’t sure what’s going on – we don’t understand or we misunderstand. He knows that a Canaanite woman will say, “Yes, Lord” to her Lord who basically told her to get lost.

He knows you as well. He knows what you need and “who” you need. His will and actions sometimes go far beyond our simple understanding. The Lord’s actions and words may not always be our idea of what is best and it never seems to be easy.

But as you know that’s not the only thing to which we have the opportunity to say, “Yes, Lord”. We have the privilege to say, “Yes” to His gifts given to us through the Gospel. Today, as we gather in this place we are blessed to hear His Word and receive its blessings with a resounding “Yes.” Now, this is a demonstration of our faith and fellowship. We say, “Yes, Lord” when He says, “I love you and you are mine.” We say, “Yes, Lord” when He says “I’m going to do something very

special for you. I'm going to die for you. I'm going to fulfill the Law and take your sins and forgive your sins." And we say, "Yes, Lord" when He says, "*Lo, I am with you always to the very end of the age.*"

Yes, Lord - be with me. I need you today. I need you when the going gets rough. I need you when I suffer patiently for my family, for my friends, or because of my job. I need you to be with me and forgive me of all of my sins, for I have fallen short of your glory. Yes, Lord, be with me today and everyday. By the strength that comes from your gift of your Word and your Holy Sacraments, be with me. Because of you and what you do for me, I say today and everyday in my life, "Yes, Lord."

The third petition looks towards the will of our Lord. Our Lord demonstrated his will to this Canaanite woman when He said; "Your daughter is healed." He demonstrates His will among us today, as Lent is not our end - but there is still more to come. His will, His "Yes" means that there is Good Friday, and there is Easter. His will means our forgiveness and our eternal "Yes." Amen.

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