

August 14, 2011
 Sermon for The Ninth Sunday After Pentecost
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX (Preached at Immanuel Lutheran – Giddings, TX)
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Matthew 15:21-28

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 15:21-28 (ESV)

²¹ 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.

1

¹ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

This has always been a tough Text ... A tough Text for us to follow, for us to hear. Can you imagine being in the place of the Canaanite woman? Her daughter is demon possessed, her false Canaanite gods have failed her, none of her people can help her ... and then she hears of Jesus, Son of David, supposedly the promised Messiah of the Jews...is it possible that He might, out of love for all, have a little bit of grace to spare for me?

Her maternal love for her child easily takes precedence over her pride as she leaves all that she knows to run to Jesus, Savior!...but... of another people, she cries out for her child, believing beyond hope, that the Savior of the Jews would care enough, would have mercy enough for her daughter.

Can you picture it? Brings a lump to my throat, thinking of her crying out...*“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; ...”* ...*only to be ignored!*

She was ignored—should she give up...go back home and continue to watch her daughter suffer? But no! Despite the disciple’s best efforts, she continued to cry out to Jesus, knowing by her newfound faith in Him as her Savior that He would not send her away empty. How she knew this, I don’t know...but there is no denying her faith wrought by the Holy Spirit.

And then, finally...finally Jesus answers her, but it wasn’t the answer that you or I expected as He said: *“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”*

OUCH! Was this really Jesus speaking?

The woman, undeterred, knelt before Him, again, crying out in faith “*Lord, help me!*”...to which an even harsher reply came, as Jesus said: *“It’s not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”*

Wwhuh...Talk about a brick wall, when we were kids would have cried out “he shut you down”...but was that really Jesus’ intention here?

Was He simply showing forth His greatness, how much better He was...effectively shutting this woman out of the kingdom of Heaven despite her faith, despite her humbleness—simply because she was not an Israelite, but only a lowly Canaanite...a Gentile?

Remember, although Jesus is true God...He is also true man, subject to the same temptations that we all are. Pride is the original sin; it was satan’s downfall and even caused the fall into sin of Adam and Eve and from them, all mankind. In our pride we look to ourselves, to our possessions, to our own abilities to get us out of trouble...even to atone for our own sins.

So we look to books, techniques, and programs to figure out how we can somehow deserve God’s grace and mercy. Follow this program for a certain number of days for sanctification, or pray this prayer and you will be granted every thing that you want, then there is the a supposed code, based on a fictional book that you are supposed to be able to find in the Bible to get the real meaning out of it...when the real meaning is found clearly written in the Gospel, found clearly in Christ...through faith in Him as our Savior.

No codes or programs, simply faith in Christ, a faith given to us by the Holy Spirit.

As Paul tells us in Ephesians: *“⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9, ESV)

I asked earlier if you could imagine being in the place of the Canaanite woman...can you?

Well you are. We have no standing at all before God...apart from Christ! The Canaanite woman understood this perfectly...she had nothing...**nothing** to offer but a plea for mercy. Before the awesome throne of God, pride goes out the window because we simply have nothing to offer...except the blood of Christ. “Just as I am, without one plea...but that THY BLOOD was shed for me.”

Jesus had every right to be proud of Himself, who He was, what He was...being the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, Divine Himself, you can't be higher than that...yet Jesus humbled Himself for you, for all of the world...leaving the perfection of Heaven to be born into a poor, powerless family to fulfill the law for those who couldn't and then taking their punishment on the cross for their sins, while those He was dying for cursed Him. Yet, out of the very same mercy shown to the Canaanite woman, He died for all mankind, even those that deny Him.

Going back to our text, at about this time, we can imagine the disciples, once again missing the point of Jesus' seemingly harsh words to the Canaanite woman.

They only wanted to get rid of her, probably tired of hearing her cry, they might have thought that Jesus was giving her what she deserved as He told her *“It’s not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”*

But we see Jesus once again defeating the oldest sin of pride as, again humbling Himself, unlike His disciples, He showed mercy. As the woman answered Jesus with a few important words “Yes, Lord...yet...” She didn’t come to Jesus demanding her rights, she agreed with His estimation of her. She acknowledged her unworthiness saying “Yes, Lord,” but she continued, *“yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”*

She steadfastly clung to her faith in Jesus alone as her only hope, trusting in His mercy and Jesus answers her saying: *“O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”* And as the Text closes we are told that: *“her daughter was healed instantly.”* Instantly! She didn’t start to feel a little better and in due time she gained her strength back, but instantly! As the Lord had spoken.

Now, this didn’t mean that neither she nor her daughter would never get sick again, and she probably also knew that they would still face physical death...but she also knew her Savior, because by the Holy Spirit, her faith was firmly in Christ.

What can we learn from the Canaanite woman...well, a lot!

We are very much like her. When it comes to our salvation, we don’t have a leg to stand on. All of our own attempts at salvation come to naught because it is only by the undeserved sacrifice of Christ that we are saved.

As we read in the third chapter of Romans: Romans 3:27-30 (ESV)
²⁷ *Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.* ²⁸ *For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.* ²⁹ *Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,* ³⁰ *since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”* (Romans 3:27-30, ESV)

Like the Gentile, Canaanite woman who clung to Him, Jesus will make us, sinful Gentiles though we are, more than we could ever make of ourselves. Through faith in Him as your Savior, you indeed have the promise of eternal life.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria

To God alone be glory