

August 20, 2017  
Sermon for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Matthew 15:21-28

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Matthew 15:21–28 (ESV)

### **The Faith of a Canaanite Woman**

<sup>21</sup> And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.  
<sup>22</sup> 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.”  
<sup>23</sup> 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.” <sup>24</sup> He answered, “**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**” <sup>25</sup> But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” <sup>26</sup> And he answered, “**It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.**” <sup>27</sup> She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus answered her, “**O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.**” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Do you ever get tired of phone calls or letters in the mail asking you to help some group of people? It seems like most of the calls on our home phone are from political groups or charities.

How about local people in our own town who always seem to be I have begun to ask myself: Would you rather be the one who is able to help or the one who has to ask for help?

That thought changes my attitude a little bit.

It is indeed a privilege to be able to help others in the name of Christ.

Some, by God's grace, have never been on the earthly begging side. But when we stand before God, we are all beggars.

We are the ones who need help. We have nothing to offer.

All we can do is stand or kneel before God and be beggars.

That was also the situation of the mother in our text today, and how wonderful to learn from Jesus' response to her that because Jesus abundantly feeds us the life-giving, sin-forgiving, and even soul-healing crumbs that we need.

A Crumb for a Mother

The Canaanite woman was just looking for a crumb. Coming in on her knees. We don't know how she got herself in the situation she was in or how her daughter had become afflicted with this demon. However, since she is identified as a Canaanite, we know that she was considered unclean, so she should be avoided.

Earlier in this chapter, Jesus had just been confronted by the scribes and Pharisees about hand washing. And He called them hypocrites “*teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (15:9).

He then heads north, away from them, to the Gentile territory of Tyre and Sidon along the Mediterranean Sea. This is where the Canaanite woman comes in. She comes up to Jesus crying, “*Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David*” (v 22).

This is amazing. She is a Canaanite. The Canaanites were the idolatrous people living in the Promised Land whom God had told his people to destroy. Even Abraham made his servant promise that he would not let Isaac marry a Canaanite (Gen 24:3).

Yet this woman comes to Jesus, calling him “Lord” and “Son of David,” recognizing His authority and that he is God’s Messiah. Where did this faith come from?

Her daughter is “severely oppressed by a demon” (v 22). She is desperate. Perhaps out of desperation, when none of her idols worked, what is a mother to do...than she heard of this man, Jesus. People have said that He does miraculous things.

For whatever reason, she is convinced Jesus can help her. She continues to cry out. But Jesus does not answer her, not a word!

We can, in one way, almost understand Jesus initial reaction. It seems like everyone has had their hand out to Jesus lately and then the Pharisees have been judging His every move and criticizing Him when He is doing good,

so can you imagine the tongue wagging the Pharisees would be doing if Jesus helped out the unclean Canaanite woman? Can Jesus really be so cold hearted?

Still, despite the silence, she is so persistent that the text says the disciples beg Jesus to send her away. This could mean that they wanted Jesus to send her away by granting her request. "This is embarrassing Jesus! Give her what she wants so she will shut up and go away!" That's implied by Jesus' response of: *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (v 24).

He is telling them why He hasn't healed her.

She has no standing as a child of Israel. But the woman continues. She begs Jesus. She kneels in front of Him. She cries out, *"Lord, help me"* (v 25).

Jesus responds with this harsh statement: *"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs"* (v 26).

Look lady, I'm not here for you. Leave me alone!

She says, *"Yes, Lord."* She confesses that Jesus is right.

But the crumbs are exactly what she wants.

You are feeding the children. Children always spill crumbs. All I want is a crumb!

Feed your children. Be the Son of David. All I want is a crumb.

*"O woman, great is your faith!"* says Jesus (v 28).

It is done! Here is a crumb. But what a crumb it was! Her daughter was healed, immediately! Jesus didn't waste time, She freed from her oppressive demon as Jesus spoke the Words.

Why the delay in acknowledging the woman? Why the test?

Coming from a woman who worshipped idols, Jesus didn't want to be just another clay figurine or another legend. He wanted to make sure that the woman really knew who He was and that she knew where the power of His Words came from.

He wanted her to know truly who held the loaf or maybe even who is the Loaf that the crumb was falling from.

Jesus' coming means crumbs...bread...for the life of the world!

Is there a Crumb for me?

The Canaanite woman was familiar with the Law. She knew, somehow, that she was a sinner and that her daughter was paying the price of being a sinner in a sinful world. She knew that she was a sinful crumb

I am a crumb too. Not a good crumb, but a sinful crumb.

I am a sinner. I am a Canaanite.

I sin, and then...then I come asking for help? I have no right.

No standing to demand anything of Jesus. I deserve nothing from Him.

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but neither do you.

I am tormented by sin. I am sorely oppressed by satan from all sides.

He does not leave me alone. He succeeds in getting me to sin. He turns things upside down in my mind. He makes evil seem good. He makes good seem not worth it or not important or even wrong. Turn on the TV and all you see is evil. One side calling the other side evil, when the truth is... *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."* (Rom. 3:23)

The devil tormented the Canaanite girl. And he torments me.

And he torments you! He gives you no rest. He leads you into sin.

Then he convinces you to hide that sin, teaches you how to cover it up. After all, it's what other people see that matters. He even convinces you that you can even hide it from God! But it's not true. That hidden sin wears us down, we can't run away. And we are so afflicted we can't go anymore, we make the realization...

I am a beggar. I am in need. I can't solve my problems.

I can't get myself out of my predicament. I can't free myself from the grasp of Satan. I can't stop his torments. I can't get rid of my sins. I can't get myself to heaven.

We are beggars of a God who should, by every right, answer us with silence. Like the Canaanite woman, I deserve no answer. I beg from a Lord who should, due to my sin, send me away empty.

Like the Canaanite woman, I deserve none of Jesus' gifts.

And neither any of us! In our sin, you have we have no standing, no right to claim or demand or even ask anything from the Son of David.

However, we live under the Gospel

We beg of a God who is merciful. We cry out like the Canaanite woman cries, "*Have mercy on me.*" She trusted that the Messiah is merciful. And she is right. She begs of the right person. There is no point in begging of one who will not have mercy. She begs for Jesus' mercy.

And so do we. We beg the Son of David to have mercy on us.

And He does! He went to the cross. He suffered hell—to take away those sins that make us so undeserving. Our God is a God of grace, a God of unconditional love, a God who died also for you!

Our little dog knows who to beg from. And it's not me. She doesn't stand around thinking that I will give her a treat because it's not coming. However, she knows that other members of the household will. So she doesn't waste time with me.

The Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21–28) also knew from whom to beg. She knew who could give her the scraps she desperately wanted. She didn't give up when met with silence or when she received seemingly unkind words.

Her hope and faith were strong. She looked to Jesus to supply her needs because she knew where the crumb would come from.

Her begging was well placed. And she was not disappointed. We should always and only beg of a Lord who is able to help.

Not only is God inclined to help me, but He is also *able* to help me. He is a God of power and might. He is a God who hears my prayers and who answers them.

The one true, Triune God is able to help you! He hears your prayers when you cry, "Lord, help me!" Your begging is well-placed.

Jesus hears and answers. He is able to help!  
I beg of a Messiah who has unending crumbs!

Crumbs continually fall to us . . . like the daughter of the Canaanite woman, all we need is a crumb—not because we aren't really that bad, but because every crumb is so powerful. Every crumb contains the mercy and grace of God.

Every crumb heals. Every crumb satisfies. Every crumb forgives. (*Give examples*  
These are the crumbs that fall to you. They are abundant, never-ending.

They feed lost sheep and lost dogs. They feed me. They feed you!

We beg from a Savior who gives us everything. Ultimately He gave His life  
into death on the cross.

He paid for my sins, for your and for the sins of the whole world!

He took your punishment. He redeemed your soul. He heals your wounds. The  
bread that falls from the Lord's table into your mouth is His body.

His blood flows from the cross to the chalice and to your lips. Your Savior  
gives you everything! Because our Lord has crumbs for the world.

He desires to feed the world with the bread of life. He wants to feed every  
lost and hungry sheep and dog, every demon-oppressed soul.

He gives us crumbs to take to our neighbor and to share with the world.  
We are beggars, and, like the Canaanite woman, we beg from the Son of David.  
He is merciful, and He is able to hear and grant our prayers.

He is a God of unending crumbs. He gives freely of the crumbs of His  
Word and the crumbs of His Sacraments.

Every crumb has the power of God. Every crumb heals us, feeds us, gives  
us life!

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds  
through Christ Jesus.

Amen.