

Reminiscere
St. Matthew 15:21-28
March 8th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Have Mercy on Me!

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, grant us, we beseech Thee, by Thy Holy Spirit, that He may strengthen our hearts and confirm our faith and hope in Thy grace and mercy, so that, although we have reason to fear because of our conscience, our sin, and our unworthiness, we may nevertheless, with the woman of Canaan, hold fast to Thy grace, and in every trial and temptation find Thee a very present help and refuge, through Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

In Bible class we have just been studying about the conquest of Canaan. We heard how the Lord God commanded the Israelites to completely destroy the people of Canaan and not let any live of man, woman and child. This was commanded because of the centuries of the false worship of the Canaanites; who ignored the Lord God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He had even sent among them the Father of the Israelites, Abraham with his wife Sarah, to serve as a testimony and example of what true worship is. Abraham and Sarah were faithful to the Lord God, their example was to serve as to the people of Canaan to repent from their false worship. Their son, Isaac with his wife Rebekah, also lived in the land of Canaan as sojourners. They were also to serve as examples of true worship to the Canaanites. As were their two sons, Jacob and Esau. Esau was drawn away by the false worship of the Canaanites, and Jacob had to live in exile for many years, but eventually he also came back and served as an example of godly living to the Canaanites. From Jacob and his wives Rachel and Leah, came forth the twelve tribes of Israel.

All of the Patriarchs sojourning in the land of Canaan did not bear fruit, the Lord God and worship of Him alone was rejected by the Canaanites. A famine came and drove Israel and his sons into the land of Egypt, where they were saved for a time, until a Pharaoh arose who did not remember the deeds of Israel's son Joseph, and they were enslaved for four hundred years. The false worship of the Canaanites became even worse during this period, so that the Lord God, through the nation of Israel was to exact punishment on those people for their false worship. The same fate that awaits all those in our present age who do not repent of their sins and false worship and cling to the One, True Triune God as the One, True Lord and Savior of mankind.

Well, we know what happened. The Israelites did destroy many of the major cities of the Canaanites, with the people and animals dwelling in them. But we also learned that the Israelites were not able to fully drive out all the Canaanites, so that they were to serve as a punishment to the Israelites for their disobedience to the Lord God. The false worship of the Canaanites eventually began to be followed by the Israelites, so that after they were oppressed by the them, they would cry unto the Lord God, and He would send them judges to rescue them, and they would enjoy a time of peace. This

pattern continued throughout the years, until we come to the time of our Lord + Jesus' time on Earth. In the Gospel of the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew, we are told of a certain Canaanite woman who has a daughter who is severely demon-possessed. It seems that the Canaanites, even in the time of our Lord + Jesus, are still living in the land; they have still not been completely driven out.

However, in this woman of Canaan we see the effect of the Word of God on an unbeliever. We are told by the Evangelist at the beginning of the Gospel reading that our Lord + Jesus "went out from there and departed to the land of Tyre and Sidon" the far northwest region of the land of Israel. He began to preach the Word of God in this region; this region that was known for its rebellion against the Lord God and its false worship. Of all the Israelites in this region, we are only told of a Canaanite woman who approaches our Lord + Jesus in the hope and faith that He would heal her severely demon-possessed daughter. And what does He do? "He answered her not a word."

It is no big stretch of the imagination to realize that this woman represents us when we come to our Lord God in prayer that He might relieve us of our burdens, and sometimes it seems that all we hear is crickets. We are in great pain and misery of soul, or body, and we get silence from the Lord + Jesus, just like this woman of Canaan. She is a Gentile, and we are Gentiles. It seems that we get the same treatment. We desire mercy. We cry out to the Lord God in the midst of our sins—from the depths of our woe we cry out to Him to save us. The cry for mercy is prayed throughout our Liturgy. We cry that the Lord would have mercy upon us, several times throughout our service. This cry should come from the heart; a heart burdened and weighed down with sin and shame.

Like this woman's demon-possessed daughter, we too are besieged on all sides by the slings and arrows of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. The devil is constantly trying to deceive us into sin, false worship, and the like, and if he is unable to deceive us into sin and shame, then he openly attacks us with all his weapons to drive us into despair, shame and false worship. He is a liar and a murderer who does not stop day or night to destroy us; to take away our faith and lead us into Hell.

And while the devil is constantly attacking us, we also have the world constantly at our heels. The world is constantly attacking us by causing us great anger and making us to lose our patience. It will allow us no peace. It persecutes us daily both from within and without. We prayed in the Collect of the Day for the Lord God to protect us in body and soul, for we are besieged by the world which seeks our harm in both body and soul. There is great sickness and harm to our bodies done daily, and there are also the daily turmoils of the soul which the devil, the world and our own flesh assail us with constantly.

The devil and the world attack us from without, but it is our sinful flesh which attacks us from within. We are constantly reminded of our sin, especially when in our anger and impatience we fall into the sins that plague us daily. We see what poor, miserable sinners we truly are. We see how desperately we need a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. We see this because we have the Word of God being preached into our ears. We see our lost condition through the preaching of the Law of God. We see how little we keep the Ten Commandments, and how we also deserve the same punishment sentenced against the land of Canaan. We deserve to be utterly destroyed on account of our sinfulness and rebellion and chasing after false gods; looking for hope and relief from any other source than the Lord God.

So, after being assailed on all sides by the devil, the world and our own sin-filled flesh, we cry out for mercy. Just like this woman of Canaan with a severely demon-possessed daughter; a daughter who attacked from all sides by the devil. We hear from the Word of God that our deliverance is found in the Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ alone. And so, we go to Him for relief from our burden of sin.

The thing is our Lord + Jesus desires to show us mercy. He wants to be merciful to us. He

showed this by leaving His heavenly throne to come down and dwell in our flesh. He humbled Himself to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary on account of His mercy towards mankind. He came to fulfill the Law perfectly for us, and to suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross because He desires to have mercy on us. This is a result of the love that He has for His creation—for us. He desires to have mercy upon us. He desires to answer our cries to have mercy upon us.

Why then does He treat this woman with silence? Why does it seem at times that our Lord + Jesus is giving us the silent treatment also? It is because He does not want the world to be unaware of this woman's great faith. Each step that our Lord + Jesus takes with this woman is to show us her great faith. First, He gives her the silent treatment. Then, He tells her that the gifts are not for her, but for the people of Israel; "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Finally, He calls her a "little dog." She is not worthy to sit at the table; she is a dog who must remain outside.

In each case, though, this woman rebuffs our Lord + Jesus and shows her great faith. "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." She acknowledges that she is indeed an outsider—a Canaanite woman whose ancestors were sentenced to be destroyed. She acknowledges that she is a little dog. But none of that matters to her, for in her faith she knows that the only help she is going to receive is from the Lord + Jesus. It is only in Him that her severely demon-possessed daughter is going to be released from her torment. The Word of God has had its effect on this woman. Yes, many Israelites were drawn away into the false worship of the Canaanites who remained in the land of Israel after their conquest, but here we see the effect of the Word of God on those Canaanites who remained in the land. The Word of God converts the hearts of all those who hear, and creates faith—great faith—in those who repent of their sin and false worship and turn to the Lord God for help in all their troubles.

This is why the Lord + Jesus seems at times to be silent with us when we cry for mercy. He wants us to see that we do indeed have great faith, that the slings and arrows of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh cannot harm us, for in our faith we too, like this woman, cling to the Lord + Jesus, even when it seems He rebuffs us. He wants us to see that He does want to give us mercy. He wants us to see that we indeed do have faith that clings to Him for that mercy. This is why He continues to send us his ministers to preach into our ears the Word of God. He continues to preach into our ears that when we cry out to Him for mercy, He will indeed have mercy upon us. This mercy begins with our souls which are in desperate need of forgiveness of sins.

He forgives us of our sins. His mercy is shown us when He forgives us our sins. For this woman, He proclaimed that her daughter was healed and she was healed that very hour. For us, His mercy is even more abundant. He washed us in the waters of Holy Baptism, which cleansed us of all our sins. When we daily drown our Old Adam in the waters of our Holy Baptism, we daily emerge as a new creation before Him, washed clean and free from sin. When we come to the minister to confess our sins, the Lord + Jesus again forgives us our sins through the lips of the pastor, who declares that our sins are forgiven. And, even though we are little dogs, that is, poor, miserable sinners unworthy to sit at the table with the children of the Master, He invites us to come to this holy altar and receive from Him His true and substantial Body and Blood given and bread and wine, so that we might receive on our lips and tongues the forgiveness of all our sins.

The Canaanites, on account of their rebellion against the Lord God and their false worship, were sentenced to be destroyed. This sinful generation, on account of their sinfulness and false worship is also sentenced to be destroyed if they do not repent and cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ. There is hope for us poor, miserable sinners, for if a woman of Canaan can have such great saving faith as to put her whole trust in the redemption found in the Lord + Jesus, there can also be salvation for us in Him as well. My dear friends, let us cling in faith to the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus, for from and through Him we have salvation from the devil, the world and our sinful flesh, and

in Him we have forgiveness and eternal life, because He desires to be merciful to us poor sinners. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, the Consolation of the sorrowful and the Strength of the weak, may the prayers of them that in any tribulation or distress cry unto Thee graciously come before Thee, so that in all their necessities they may mark and receive Thy manifold help and comfort; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!