

Reminiscere  
St. Matthew 15:21-28  
March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## He Answered Her Not a Word

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Sermon Text:**

And behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

### **Prayer in Pulpit before 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, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One 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.

There are many in this world who when their prayers seem to go unanswered turn their backs on the One to Whom they pray. We live in a world and society where we expect instant gratification. Some of us are old enough to both still remember dial-up internet connections, and yet we also rage quit a webpage that does not load in five seconds. We live in a society of convenience. We get gas for our vehicles when we want. We can go to the grocery store and buy the food that we want; even some things that are not in season in the climate we live in. We are used to this convenience, even though our access to some of these things have been strained in recent times. We are shocked when these things are not made readily available, or have run out.

It is with this same expectation that we approach our Lord God in prayer. We expect to have our prayers answered immediately. And if we do not get them in the time frame we have set for ourselves, we view the Lord God in an unappealing light. This is especially true when our prayers are a request of our Lord to deliver us from some turmoil. Our angst is further compounded when not only do we not get our wishes granted immediately, but our lives get even more broiled in trouble; when our lives get worse not better. It is easy for us as poor, miserable sinners to blame the Lord God for His apparent inaction. This is why we have this Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist every year during Lent to teach us about faith and perseverance.

We are presented with a Canaanitish woman—a foreigner—who was a descendant of the people's of the land of Canaan, whom the Lord God had ordered the Israelites to completely wipe out on account of their idolatry and unbelief. Given this woman's ancestry it would be understandable if she not only ignored the Lord + Jesus, but rejected Him outright. This is what our Lord endured in the

previous section of this chapter from St. Matthew. The scribes and Pharisees had accused the Lord's disciples of breaking tradition by eating with unwashed hands. They ignored the Law of God and supplanted it with their own human traditions. Even though they accuse the disciples of disobeying the traditions, this accusation is really leveled toward the Lord + Jesus. In their minds, He should correct the disciples, and make them follow the traditions of men. This is really an example of the scribes and Pharisees rejecting the Lord + Jesus and setting up their own false idolatry.

This is the contrast that is made by the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew in this chapter of his Gospel. We have the unbelief and idolatry of the scribes and Pharisees, who were children of Abraham, and were the Lord God's chosen people, contrasted with the faith and perseverance of the Canaanitish woman, who was a child of a people of apostasy. She is unwavering in her faith of the Lord + Jesus. She knows that He is merciful and full of lovingkindnesses, just as we sang in our Introit for the day. We are given this Gospel on this day to be given an example of great faith; of unwavering faith in the midst of trial.

Our Lord + Jesus seems to rebuff her. She comes to Him and addresses Him with the proper title and respect of a faithful person. She calls Him both "Lord" and "Son of David." In this title, she admits something the scribes and the Pharisees from the previous section would not admit, that He was both God and man. She calls Him "Lord" to denote His divinity. She calls Him "Son of David" to denote He is a man, and to recognize Him as the Messiah, the Anointed One of the Lord God. She acknowledges Who He is and what He is! He is the Lord God come in the flesh to save and redeem His people. In recognizing who and what He is she cannot doubt that her prayer will be answered; that her severely demon-possessed daughter would have the demon cast out.

Only a loving God would deign to cast off His divinity to come and bear the flesh of His own creation. This is the kind of Lord God that we have, One Who leaves His throne in Heaven to come and be a part of this creation. He even endures shame, beating, spitting, scourging, mockery, and death for His beloved creation. He endures suffering and death for us, His beloved children. He Who is the Lord God became a man in order to redeem mankind. Our Lord knows what it is to be a man, because He is both God and man. And yet, mankind does recognize its own manhood. It does not recognize its weakness, its sin, that this flesh will die. Mankind does not recognize that this flesh is full of the sickness of sin, and therefore needs a Physician. We need the Healer of our Souls to save us from sin and death, and yet many reject Him.

They reject Him because they are too used to getting their own way. Whatever mankind asks for, he is given immediately. Everything we need in this life is at our fingertips. And when we find ourselves in some trouble for which we petition the Lord + Jesus, and are met with silence as this Canaanitish woman was, we are quick to halt our prayers, and seek the answers or solution from our own works and striving.

This Canaanitish woman—who is called a Syro-Phoenician in St. Mark's Gospel—teaches us how we are to petition our Lord in the trials of our lives. This woman has great faith, our Lord acknowledges this at the end of the Gospel. Then why does He rebuff her throughout the pericope until the end? He does this in order that we may see this woman's great faith. This narrative is a part of the Church's year. We hear it every year as a testament to this woman's great faith. It a call to us to imitate her great faith; to be as persistent as she is in our prayers. For the Lord + Jesus is a loving Lord God. He is tenderhearted and full of lovingkindness. He desires us to continue to petition Him, even when it seems our prayers go unanswered. We, in our sorry sinful state, give up on our prayers far too easily, because we are used to getting our way from this world; we are used to convenience.

Our Lord who came down from Heaven; Who humbled Himself to be born of a virgin, and Who suffered and died to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil, knows our suffering. He

desires to heal us of our iniquities and infirmities. He wants to show us how great a faith we can possess. Even as this Canaanitish woman reveals her great faith in this Gospel reading. See how persistent she is: she comes and addresses Him with the proper title of "Lord" and "Son of David." Yet, He answer her not a word. This does not phase her, for she continues to cry out, so that the disciples plead on her behalf to the Lord to send her away. She was so persistent in her pleas for mercy that they were tired of her pleas for mercy.

Then our Lord + Jesus says an amazing thing. He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of house of Israel. He was sent to the sheep who rejected Him. What does this mean for the Gentiles? What does this mean for us who are the descendants of the Gentiles? In response to this, the Canaanitish woman comes before the Lord + Jesus, kneels before Him in worship, and pleads to Him to help her. Her prayer is not just for herself, it is not even just for her daughter who is grievously vexed with a demon, but for all the Gentiles. Her plea is a plea for the entire world. "Help us, Lord + Jesus!" "Have mercy on us, Lord + Jesus!" "Hear our prayers, Lord + Jesus!" "Save us from sin and death, from the devil, this world, and our sinful flesh!" "Come and be our Savior and redeem us!"

Our Lord offers one more roadblock to her prayers. But it is not a no! It is an invitation to express her great faith. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." The children of Israel had rejected the Bread of Life. They crucified Him on the tree of the holy cross. They even sealed His tomb to prevent Him from coming out of the grave again. The Bread of Life was given to the Gentiles. The Canaanitish woman acknowledges her position, she is a servant, an unworthy sinner, undeserving of the grace of the Lord God on account of her sins and trespasses. The Lord calls the Israelites children, she calls them "masters." She knows her unworthiness. As we confess in the explanation to the Lord's Prayer, "we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray." And yet, we still plead to the Lord + Jesus to grant us our petitions.

She is content to receive crumbs; the crumbs that fall from the master's table. In this is revealed her great faith. We see her persistent and unwavering faith. Great is her faith, our Lord declares. Then our Lord + Jesus grants her petition, "Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

My dear friends, may we learn to pray to our Lord God with such faith. May we be as perseverant as this Canaanitish woman. For she recognized Who the Lord + Jesus was, He was both God and man come from Heaven to be with His people, fulfill the Law, and redeem them with His own suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. We too know Who our Lord + Jesus is. We know that He is loving and merciful. Will He not also lovingly and graciously full our petitions and forgive us of all our sins and trespasses, so that we may be united with Him in Heaven for all eternity? Our Lord + Jesus will indeed grant us our petitions according to His good will, for we pray to Him in the faith and persistence which pleads with Him earnestly to save us from sin and death. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

#### **Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

#### **The Votum:**

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

Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*