

Reminiscere

St. Matthew 15:21-28

March 13th, 2022

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

Pastor Jerald Dulas

Even the Little Dogs Eat the Crumbs

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who through the innocent suffering and death of Thy dear Son hast opened unto us a rich fountain of divine power unto life and godliness, we beseech Thee, replenish us with Thy Holy Spirit, that by sincere repentance and true faith we may in this present time cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit and, by Thy grace dwelling in us, abound more and more in holiness and pureness of living; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, 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.

“Oh, woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” No truer words have ever been spoken. This woman who is a descendant of the people of Canaan shows greater faith than the scribes and Pharisees who had dedicated themselves to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They had rejected this Man + Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. To them, He was only a man. Not only that, but He was a Man who grew up in the wrong region; He grew up in Nazareth. He grew up in the land of the Northern Kingdom, who had been exiled to Assyria, and the people that took over the region were Samaritans; people of Jewish and Gentile descent. The scribes and Pharisees would rather have seen this Man + Jesus of Nazareth hung on a tree to die. Indeed, they fulfilled that wish when they propelled Pontius Pilate to crucify Him on the tree of the holy cross.

The religious leaders of the land rejected the Lord + Jesus, but this woman of Canaanite descent clings to the Lord + Jesus in faith. Her faith was a great faith. Remember that the Canaanites were to be utterly destroyed by the Israelites at the Lord God’s command, on account of their false worship, unbelief, and rejection of the One, True, Triune Lord God. The Israelites did not utterly destroy all the Canaanites, and they eventually adopted the false religions of the Canaanites to their eventual demise. For not only the Northern Kingdom was exiled, but also the Southern Kingdom was exiled into Babylon.

That this Canaanite woman believes on the Lord + Jesus; that she has great faith in the Lord + Jesus is a testament to the grace and mercy of the Lord God. For she could not have had faith in the Lord + Jesus if she had not heard about the Messiah. Those Jews who were faithful to their Lord and God served as examples to the lost people of Canaan. They bore witness to the mercies of the Lord God, and some Canaanites heard and believed. This woman is one of those who heard of the mercy and compassion of the Lord God—who had heard the promise of a Savior for mankind—and believed that this Man + Jesus was the promised Savior—the promised Messiah. Unlike the scribes and Pharisees who had Moses and the Prophets, who studied them daily, and who had rejected this +

Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, this Canaanite woman—a woman whose ancestors had been slated for destruction—believes on the Lord + Jesus as the One, True Messiah. She believed that this Man + Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Savior Who had come into the world to redeem mankind from their sins.

This woman knew her place, too. She knew who her ancestors were. She knew that the Lord God had commanded their destruction, and yet, she believes on the Lord + Jesus. She also knows the consequences of sin. She saw this in her daughter who was severely demon-possessed. The corruption of sin had so overtaken her daughter that she was tormented by a demon. It was the ultimate consequence of sin in the world. It was the ultimate consequence of sin in a person. This Canaanite woman's daughter is really only more of a background character—an afterthought—for this woman's faith is the main event of this pericope. Her faith contrasts her daughter's demon-possession. Her faith in the Lord + Jesus is the ultimate cure for her demon-possessed daughter. She believes that rescue from the power of the devil—rescue from sin and death—were to be found in the Lord + Jesus alone.

This is why she is so persistent in her prayer to the Lord + Jesus. Even when He seemingly rebuffs her, she shows no sign of worry or defeat. This is why the Lord + Jesus does seem to rebuff her, because He wants to show everybody who witnesses this foreigner's—this outsider's—persistence to see an example of truly great faith. This woman serves as an example to us. Her faith is an example to us poor sinners. When we are dragged down by sin and shame; when we feel the weight of temptations and trials, we can learn how to be persistent in our faith and continue on in our prayers to the Lord + Jesus to grant us what we desire.

For our Lord + Jesus desires to grant our prayers. He desires to free us from the bonds that hold us in chains to sin. This woman's daughter was severely demon-possessed. She knew full well the consequences of sin in this world. When we are weighed down by our sins, faith teaches us that forgiveness can only be found in the Lord + Jesus. It is only through His innocent suffering and death that we have forgiveness of our sins. He freely grants this to all those who cling to Him in faith. He may seem for a time to rebuff us, in order to strengthen our faith and draw us closer to Him, but He desires to grant us release from our captives.

This woman's persistent prayer, which was grounded in her great faith, reflects the words of the Introit for today. We sang in the Introit that the Lord God would remember His tender mercies and His lovingkindnesses. When we pray this, do we mean to imply that the Lord God has somehow forgotten to be merciful and compassionate? No, we pray these words of the Psalmist so that WE can remember the mercy and lovingkindness of the Lord God. In our sinfulness, we are tempted often to forget just how much our Lord God desires to restore to us life and salvation through His gift of the forgiveness of our sins. Our loving Lord + Jesus wants to teach us forgiveness is found in Him alone. But He also wants us to learn how troubled by sin we truly are.

When we have a few minutes, or hours, or days where we seem to be living a good, Christian life, we tend to become puffed up with pride in ourselves. We start to forget about our sin, and how it has corrupted us to our very core. We forget that no amount of good, clean living is going to remove sin from us. We are worse off than the severely demon-possessed daughter of the Canaanite woman, for she was ever reminded of the corruption within her, whereas when we are puffed up with pride in our own good works, we fail to see how much sin has infected us. We are not worthy to sit at the Father's table as one of His children. We do not deserve the bread of the Father's children. The Father does not throw the bread of the children to the little dogs. The bread is only for the children of the heavenly Father, for those who cling to Him in faith and look for their forgiveness and salvation from Him alone.

The woman of Canaan is compared to a little dog. Here she is asking for the bread of the

children—for the rescue of her daughter from severe demon-possession—and the Lord’s response is to declare she is not worthy of that bread. A person of lesser faith would be taken aback. They would try to defend their position and say that they were not that bad of a person. Seriously, we cannot be that bad of a person, we go to church, we pray, we read and study the Bible and the Lutheran confessions. Surely, we are not undeserving of the children’s bread. Such would be the response of a person that trusts more in themselves than in the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits.

But what is this Canaanite woman’s response? What is the response of someone whose ancestors were meant to be utterly destroyed? What is the response of this foreigner who by all rights should not even exist? Her response is one of great faith. She accepts the admonition of the Lord + Jesus. She recognizes that she is not worthy of the children’s bread. She is a foreigner, an outsider, a sinner, with a daughter racked with the severe consequences of sin. She has no good thing in her which she can put before the Lord + Jesus as something deserving of His gifts. She knows her condition, and confesses it. She knows that she is not worthy of the bread of the children, but she also knows that the crumbs that fall from the table of the Lord + Jesus are more than sufficient for her.

In her repentance and faith, she is ready and willing to receive only the crumbs that the Lord + Jesus would give her. She believed they would be enough. What great faith this woman has! How glorious it is for us when know our lost condition, and in repentance and faith accept the crumbs that fall from the table of the heavenly Father.

So then, does she only receive the crumbs? NO! The Lord + Jesus is not about handing out crumbs to anyone who clings to Him in faith. He proclaims that she is worthy to receive the bread of the children; she is worthy to have her daughter healed of her demon-possession on account of her faith. We are also worthy to receive the bread of the heavenly Father as His dear children. For we cling in faith to Him, and His promises. We know that His promises are sure. We know that rescue from our sins is found in the Only-Begotten Son of the heavenly Father, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ.

He invites us to sit at the table with Him so that He might give to us the bread of life. He gives to us at this altar on bended knee His very Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the remission of all our sins. He does not give us crumbs from the table, but He gives to us a foretaste of the everlasting feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom. He invites us to sit down with Him and receive forgiveness from all of our sins. Therefore, my dear friends, let us come to this altar and receive the bread of Heaven—our Lord’s Body and Blood—which gives to us forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. For in our sinfulness, we were unworthy foreigners, undeserving of anything the Lord God possessed. But He has declared us worthy on account of the innocent suffering and death of the Only-Begotten Son of the Father to Whom we cling to alone in faith for the remission of all our sins. 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!