

Reminiscere
St. Matthew 15:21-28
March 16th, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Even the Dogs Eat of the Crumbs

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And He answered and said, ‘It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs.’
But she said, ‘Yea, Lord: for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’”

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.

My dear friends, the mustard seed is one of the smallest of seeds, but when the plant grows and matures it produces much fruit. It bears many more mustard seeds that can be made into delicious Dijon mustard. Our Lord + Jesus says that if someone have faith even as small as a grain of mustard seed, he can say to a mountain be removed from this place and be moved to another place. Or, he can say to a sycamore tree be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey. This is how strong a person’s faith can be.

This kind of faith is not strong because a person has some hidden talent within themselves. It is not because they have uncovered some lost source of power in themselves so that now they can perform miracles and do all kinds of wonderful things. Faith does not look inside of itself. Our faith does not look inside of ourselves for power and strength. This is not what makes faith strong. Faith looks outside of itself. It looks to the Lord + Jesus, and to our Triune Lord God, for the source of its strength.

This is why many people are led into doubt and despair. They have thoroughly been bamboozled by the false preachers, who claim that if a person has faith as small as a mustard seed, then they can tap this raw power that is hidden in them, and do miraculous things. When this proves false, when they are not able to move mountains to another place, or replant trees from the earth into the sea, they begin to believe that their faith is weak, or non-existent. Then they think that they must work harder at finding this faith hidden in themselves which will do these great things. When it never comes, they despair that they are even a Christian.

But, my dear friends, this is not faith at all. Faith does not look inside of ourselves. It looks to the true source of power and strength. It looks to the Lord + Jesus. It looks to the One Who can actually do the things we desire. That many people misplace their faith; that they place it in their own ability and strength is why many people’s prayers go unanswered. They rely upon the virtues of their own prayers.

They believe that their prayers are not answered because of something that they are not doing well, or good, enough. They make the outcome of their prayers dependent upon themselves. Prayer becomes something of which they are the masters, and if their prayers do not produce fruit, then it must be because of something they are lacking; some innate power that they have not tapped into to cause their prayers to be effective.

True prayer—true faith—looks not inside of ourselves for the answers, but it looks to the only True Source, to the Lord + Jesus, Who grants our prayers out of His grace and mercy. This is why we get to hear every year this narrative of the Canaanitish woman begging our Lord for mercy. She shows us what true prayer is. She shows us what true faith is.

Many people approach prayer as a last resort, after they have tried everything else. This is especially true of unbelievers. How often we see in the movies, or on TV, some person praying to God as a last-ditch effort. “I’m not a praying man” is how they begin their prayer. This is probably not the way to start a prayer to the Lord God. “Hey God, I do not really believe in you, but will you answer my prayer anyway?” For them, praying to God is just one more method to get what they want. This is why their prayer falls upon deaf ears, because the Lord God does not hear prayers not prayed in faith. And then when their request does not happen, they blame the Lord God, when they should really be looking at their own unbelief.

The Lord God is not the great vending machine in the sky, where we put our prayers in, and our request comes out. It is not really a prayer of faith to make the Lord God the last place we look in times of trouble. This is what makes the prayer of this Canaanitish woman so wonderful. She is a foreigner. She is not of Jewish descent. And yet, she has more faith than many people born of the seed of Israel. Her prayer to the Lord + Jesus is not one where she has tried everything else, and just to hedge her bets, she might as well put in a request to Him as well. No, my dear friends, she believes on the Lord + Jesus from the start. For, what does she call Him? She says, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David.” Son of David is another name for the Messiah. She has hung around enough Jews to have heard the promise of a Redeemer to be sent into this world to save mankind from their enemies. She recognizes that this Man + Jesus of Nazareth, is the Messiah come into the world.

If He is the Savior; if He is the One Who delivers us from our enemies, then He is the One to which she should go. Her daughter is plagued by one of the worst enemies she could face—she is “grievously vexed with a devil.” Her daughter is in the very grip of Satan’s horde. The only One Who can save her daughter is the Messiah. It is only the Lord + Jesus, this Man of Nazareth, the Son of David, Who can heal her daughter, and free her from the bonds of Satan’s clutch. She does not seek this power within herself. She cannot defeat the devil vexing her daughter by some merit or virtue hidden within herself. Only the Lord God can rescue her daughter. Only the Son of David can free her daughter from the devil’s clutches.

And she has no doubt that He can do it. Many times, when we pray, we doubt if we are even being heard. Our faith is weak. It is smaller than a mustard seed. We pray as if out of obligation. Like it is one more thing we should do to rectify the situation. The reason is because we still believe we have some hidden strength or power in us that we must tap into in order to solve the situation. We do not wholly give over our troubles to the only One Who can save us from our distresses. Not so with this Syro-Phoenician woman, this Canaanitish woman. She has faith greater than a mustard seed that the Lord + Jesus will save her daughter. She needs only to make her request known and it will be granted.

The Lord + Jesus knows the faith of this woman and chooses to make an example of her for all generations to come. What is His initial response to her begging? Silence. Crickets. “He answered her not a word.” Just like it is with our prayers. We may hear silence at first; no response. It makes us wonder if praying is worth it at all. Such is our weak faith. But when met with silence by the Lord +

Jesus, this woman does give up. She cries all the more louder. She begs with even more earnest. This is what faith produces. It begs and begs until an answer is given. It petitions the Lord God until He answers our prayer with a yes or a no.

The Lord + Jesus then continues to prove her faith by questioning her worthiness. She is a foreigner, a Canaanitish woman, a descendant of those who the people of Israel were supposed to completely wipe out on account of their unbelief and false worship. She is not worthy to receive the gifts of the Lord + Jesus. He did not come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not some foreigner. When our worthiness is tested, this also causes us to pause and question whether we deserve what we ask. We are poor, miserable sinners. We are worthy of none of things for which we pray. Our doubt and sin should disqualify us from even asking for something from the Lord God, let alone actually receiving it. But this does not deter the Canaanitish woman, and it should not deter us, either.

She continues to plead with the Lord + Jesus. She truly believes He is the only One Who can heal her daughter. She truly has great faith. Her faith is greater than a mustard seed. And our Lord + Jesus uses this woman to show us what faith is. She has been met with silence, called unworthy, and now He even tells her that His gifts are not for her. It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. She is not only unworthy as a foreigner, but she is a dog, not worthy to sit at the table as a child of the Lord God. This too does not deter her.

Her faith is so great that she realizes that she does not need the whole loaf. A grain of mustard seed is small. So too is a crumb. It is a tiny portion, the same size as many seeds. It will not cure your hunger. One crumb will not satisfy your hunger. You will walk away from the table, still hungry and desiring more bread. But for this Canaanitish woman, it is enough. She recognizes the power and authority that belongs to the Son of David. She recognizes what the Lord + Jesus can do with just a crumb of His strength. With a crumb from the table, her daughter can be healed from the grievous vexing of her daughter by a devil. "O woman, great is thy faith."

Her faith did not seek a cure for her daughter in her own merits or strength. She did not look for help from the Christ because He was one more remedy in a long line of remedies. Her faith trusted solely in the Lord + Jesus as the only source of help. She was not going to let Him go until He helped her. She received the healing of her daughter who was grievously vexed by a devil in that instant.

This is why, my dear friends, if we have faith like a mustard seed; if we have faith like this Canaanitish woman, we can say to the mountain be removed and go to this other place, and to a tree be uprooted and planted in the sea. Not because we have somehow tapped into some hidden power or virtue within ourselves, but because we believe that our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ, can do all these things for us. Therefore, when we pray, let us have faith like this Syro-Phoenician woman. Let us not doubt, but firmly believe that our Lord God will grant us all our petitions. For we are indeed unworthy for all that we pray, but our heavenly Father is indeed gracious and merciful, and will grant them all to us by grace.

This is especially true when we come before our heavenly Father requesting Him to deliver us from our enemies; from our battle with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. For He knows that we are poor, miserable sinners in need of His grace. He has sent His Son into this world, into our flesh, for this very purpose, to rescue us from our spiritual enemies. Our Lord + Jesus has come into this world to win for us forgiveness of our sins, eternal life, and salvation by offering up His innocent life upon the tree of the holy cross for us poor sinners. Therefore, let us beg our Lord + Jesus daily to forgive us of our sins, so that we may lead holy lives in time, and forever hereafter in Heaven. 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!