

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

<sup>21</sup> Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” <sup>24</sup> He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

<sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. <sup>26</sup> He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” <sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour. **This is God’s Word.**

**Dear Friends,**

When you think of Jesus, what are some words you would use to describe him? Maybe loving, compassionate, forgiving, Savior, self-sacrificing and many more. Descriptive words for Jesus often include words that point to his love and mercy and yet, as we listen to this portion of scripture, it seems like that love and mercy is gone.

Here we have a woman pleading for help for her child and Jesus ignores her and when he finally acknowledges her, he calls her a dog. That doesn’t seem like the Jesus that we know so let’s take a closer look at this interaction between Jesus and what he calls **“This woman of Great Faith.”** Let’s take a closer look at Jesus’ reaction to her, a closer look at what makes her faith great and then consider what we can learn from this event.

**I.** At times Jesus needed to get away with his disciples for a little bit of rest and/or some private teaching. Tyre and Sidon were north of the land of Israel on the seashore. You might think that being outside of Israel and away from the Jewish people that very few people would know who Jesus was but that was not the case.

Obviously, this Canaanite women had heard about Jesus and also what the scriptures had to say about the promised Messiah. We can see that in the way she greets him, **“Son of David.”** That was a Messianic greeting noting that Jesus had descended from the line of King David. She also understood that he could cast out demons because she was crying out to Jesus in a loud voice that was easily heard by him and everyone around him.

This woman was bold in her request. She didn’t tell Jesus how to fix her problem. She just asked for his mercy on her and her daughter who was demon possessed. She left it up to Jesus to determine how he was going to answer her and possibly help her.

As I think of my own prayers, sometimes they are bold too, but very often I also tell God how I want him to fix my problems and I don’t always come in humility – seeking his mercy. Matter of fact, sometimes I come thinking I somehow deserve to be heard and I deserve an answer.

As this woman cried out to Jesus she is teaching us to think about our own prayers and how we approach our Lord. May it always be in humility, laying our problems at our Savior's feet and letting him decide how he is going to answer us.

**II.** This woman had a great faith because she recognized that she could not defeat Satan and his demons. She needed God's Son – I wonder if she had heard about how Jesus defeated Satan in the desert. She trusted that he had the power over Satan and his demons and so she called on the only one who could help her. She trusted Jesus power over Satan.

Yet the disciples were upset at her display of faith. Her loud cries embarrassed them and so they pleaded with Jesus to help her and then send her away. They knew that Jesus was more powerful than this demon that obsessed the woman's daughter. They had watched Jesus cast out demons before but what was Jesus' answer to their plea, **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."**

What does that mean? Well, Jesus ministry was carried out for the Jewish people but after he had paid for the sins of the whole world and accomplished his mission, the "Good News" or gospel would go out from Jerusalem into the whole world. And we can't forget that Jesus was called a Light for the Gentiles and at times he interacted with Gentiles such as the Centurion with the sick servant and the Samaritan woman at the well. So as Jesus spoke these words it would appear that he was testing this woman and teaching his disciples as well.

Do we sometimes get impatient with God at times like the disciples did? Do we get frustrated that he is not answering our prayer or the prayers of our friends quickly enough? It is hard for us to be patient and understand that God does things in his own way and in his own time and sometimes he is testing our faith as well. This incident reminds us to be patient with God and to continue to trust in him and his wisdom.

**III.** This woman listens to and her heart bows to all that Jesus says. She acknowledges his words and does not tell him he has to do this for her and her daughter. Rather she knelt before him in humility and again pleaded for his mercy. Jesus' answer still seemed somewhat cold, **"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."** Was he really calling her a dog? Yes, but the original language tells us that he was talking about a small dog that was a pet which sat under the table waiting for scraps to fall. The woman acknowledged that in her reply, **"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."** Jesus could be merciful to her without taking anything away from his mission to redeem the sins of the world. She would be happy with one little scrap of help for her daughter.

She had been listening closely to what Jesus said and she was persistent in her request. If Jesus had sent her away, then she would of left knowing that the answer to her request was "No," but she kept asking and listening to him until she got an answer.

There certainly a lesson in persistence here for us. How often are our prayers "one and done?" Sometimes our Savior wants us to be persistent like this woman – not arguing with God or telling him what to do, but coming before him with a humble heart until he clearly answers

our prayer in some way. And Jesus acknowledged her faith as he answered her prayer in a positive way.

**IV. In the final verse Jesus said, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”** What did it mean that she had great faith? She believed in Jesus as the Promised Messiah – the Savior – her Savior. She acknowledged her unworthiness and came to him in humility. She trusted in his mercy and She made her request trusting that he would not refuse her. Finally She continued until she received a certain answer.

If Jesus looked at us would he describe us in the same way? Do we have a firm belief in Jesus as our Savior? Do we acknowledge that we are sinful and approach our Savior in humility? Do we trust in his mercy and are we persistent in our prayers trusting him to answer them in his own way and his timeframe? Sometimes. I would like to say that my faith is “great” every day but I have my good days and my bad days. that is why I need a constant diet of Jesus Word to keep me on track. I am thankful that my Savior is patient with me and that he doesn’t measure the amount of faith in my heart but rather sees that there is faith in my heart in the 1<sup>st</sup> place because it is faith that saves me and faith that saves you.

May this portion of scripture encourage us in our prayer lives and in our study of God’s Word as it reminds us that prayer is a conversation with God. May it prompt us to be persistent in our prayers and may we trust God’s promise to hear and answer the prayers of his children. Amen.