

Sermon for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost  
Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus and the Canaanite Woman – A Crumb of Grace Will Do

Grace, peace, and mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

As a child I got an allowance from my parents, a quarter. But in my eyes it just as well could have been a million dollars. In our house, a lunch that consisted of beanie weenies was considered a feast. My, my, the ham salad mom made (later we found out was made from bologna) was good eating! The point is the little things in life can seem pretty big. They are God's graciousness being showered upon you.

With this in mind we approach our gospel for today about Jesus and the Canaanite woman.

A Canaanite woman comes to Jesus pleading to Him, "Jesus, Son of David, help me for my daughter is seriously demonized." Yes, she is a person who is outside the of the Chosen People of Israel, but she knows He can help her daughter and she can't. She may be helpless, but she is not hopeless. She comes in hope to the hope of the world. The Lord of heaven and earth. The promised Son of David. She can do nothing. Jesus can do everything.

But Jesus did not answer her a word. She was met with silence. She gets no word of healing or rebuke from Jesus. But she keeps crying out for who knows how long. This we do know. It was long enough for the disciples to lose patience with her. "Send her away Jesus for he keeps pestering us." Jesus does not send her away, but says, "I was sent to the lost sheep of Israel."

She persists, like Jacob wrestling with the LORD at the Jabbock, she will not let go until she receives a blessing. What is interesting is that Jesus' word does not drive her away. His word only draws her closer. She comes and kneels, a posture of worship, begging, "Lord Help Me!"

Jesus' first words spoken to her sound like an insult. "It is not fair to give the children's bread to the dogs." For this Canaanite woman these words become words of hope. She takes Jesus at his word. OK, Jesus, if I am a dog; even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the master's table. For this woman a crumb of God's grace will be more than enough. A crumb of Jesus' power can take away the torment that the demon is causing her daughter. O yes! Being a dog in God's house just perfect for her. A crumb in Jesus' hands is worth more than all the wealth in this world. A crumb is all that is needed to destroy a demon tormenting her little girl.

Two Sunday's ago we heard the account of Jesus feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. These resources seem like a crumb in the midst of such a crowd. Each would be lucky to get a crumb. But remember this, a crumb in Jesus' hands is never just a crumb. This crumb became a feast and fed the crowd until they were satisfied and filled with 12 baskets of left overs.

These last few weeks we have seen turmoil in our nation's cities with riots and looting. We hear that law breakers are praised and hard working people trying to put bread on the table for their families are the problem. Society seems turned upside down. We hear COVID-19 is disaster and a killer, then we change the channel and hear it is under control and not so bad. We hear experts feeding us their ideas and one expert contradicts the next. Wondering what all this means we get busy and block it all out. We busy ourselves in our own pursuits and forget the one we can really depend on and count on in times of trouble.

All of this seems new to us like we never saw it coming. In reality our Lord did see it coming. When you look at and read scripture nothing is really all that new at all. The church has been through crisis and tumult. The church has faced struggle and challenges from the beginning. At home, at school, at work, sin and death come crashing down all around us. There are times where we experience all this up close and personal.

We go to town see beggars at stop lights and exit ramps. We think, now there is a beggar, that is not me. But Martin Luther knew better. A note was found in his pocket at his death reading, "We are Beggars that is true." Lord Help me! Cried the Canaanite Women. We need crumbs of God's grace for us who are demonized to temptations and sin. We need Jesus to drive them away. We are beggars. We need God's crumbs. With Jesus a crumb is never a crumb, it is a feast.

Jesus gave the crumb that this Canaanite woman sought and her daughter was healed instantly.

Our healing from our broken relationship with God comes from the feast we receive from the Holy Cross of Christ's suffering. We receive a feast of forgiveness that comes from Jesus' pierced hands and feet. This is what we need the most. This is what the world need most of all. And each day and each Sunday we feast on His life-giving word which teaches us of God's love that kept Him on the cross. This gift is here and it is all the same for each of us.

While things in society, our lives, and in the church might change, one thing never changes. God's promises won for us on the Holy Cross of salvation do not change. Whether we are joyful or in sorrow, the crucified and risen Lord Jesus always comes to deliver the goods, his gracious gifts. Whether we are in this beautiful church or in the simplicity of sharing a devotional time with family or a friend, our crucified and risen is present delivering His gifts. You can count on that. Even when it seems you can't count on much, you can count on Jesus.

These gifts are far more than crumbs. They are life giving, family building, hope assuring.

This why Jesus was in Tyre and Sidon that day. He came to give of Himself. He came to set a demonized girl free. He came to hear the prayers of a greatly worried mother. Jesus came for the Lost Children of Israel. And the surprise is that She ends up being one of the lost children whom Jesus is seeking. How is that? She may not have been an Israelite by birth, but she ended up being a child of Israel by faith. And Jesus commends her for her great faith.

And Jesus is here for us too in the same way. He is present so that we may receive and have faith from the feast of the crumbs of God's grace. Though we are not Israel by birth we are by faith, the renewed Israel under Christ's rule. Remember crumbs from Jesus are never just crumbs.

One thing before we close. On that day I pray that you will arrive at the great heavenly feast and look for our loved ones and friends who died in the Lord, fellow beggars, all of them. Maybe, just maybe you might run into a Canaanite woman and her daughter, who received a crumb of mercy and God's grace, but a great feast of life.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.