



Father Joseph's Outline for the Sunday of the Canaanite Woman

Matthew 15:21-28 - Sunday 02/01/2009

**“O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.
And her daughter was healed instantly.” (Matthew 15:28)**

Insight into the background of this healing

- Recorded in Matthew 15, as well as Mark 7.
- Jesus withdrew to the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon with His disciples, seeking rest and private time for teaching.
 - “And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.” (Mark 6:31-32)
- The attempt to retreat was unsuccessful, because the people followed them into the wilderness at the district of Gennesaret, including the Canaanite woman.
 - “From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden.” (Mark 7:24)

The importance of the Canaanite woman's plea

- Jesus and His disciples were retreating after He and His message had been rejected by the Pharisees and the scribes.
 - “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites.’” (Mark 7:5-6)
- The Canaanite woman, with her plea to “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David,” stands in strong contrast to this rejection, showing how a Gentile woman can recognize what the learned could not perceive.

The teaching element in Jesus' approach

- **Method:** Jesus ignores the woman, which encourages His disciples to intercede with Him.
 - **Lesson:** The intercession of Christians on behalf of non-believers and those who are in need of God's mercy is expected by God and has a very powerful effect.
- **Method:** Jesus delayed giving attention to the woman, not granting her request right away.

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- **Lesson:** We need to learn to trust in God that an answer does not always come at the time that we would like, but rather at the time that God knows is best for us.
- **Method:** Jesus engaged with the woman in dialogue: “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (Matthew 15:26).
 - **Lesson:** Our relationship with God is dynamic and constructive, intended to lift our level of understanding and inner strength.
- **Method:** Jesus gave the woman a unique answer using the image of dogs.
 - **Lesson:** Our relationship with God is not about only receiving the things we want, but it involves growth, where we learn how to read and understand the messages coming from God to us.

Clarifications

- ✓ Jesus’ remarks about being sent “only to lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and the analogy of dogs He uses, should not be misinterpreted as harsh and insensitive.
- ✓ Jesus says this to convey that He came to this region with the priority to minister to His disciples first.
- ✓ Jesus clarified to her that the healing through Him will happen by the power of the real God, *not* by her pagan gods.
- ✓ The woman asserts her request by saying that sometimes even the dogs (or rather, puppies)- pets associated with the family, but not equal to the family- get small pieces of food around the table, which satisfies them without taking away anything from the kids.
- ✓ Jesus is deeply moved by her faith, compliments her, and explains to her that the demon has already left her daughter.

Important: There is nothing in this passage which indicates that the woman was insulted by Jesus’ remarks. The saying of Jesus- in Greek **κυνάριον**- refers to a little puppy, not a big street dog. There is also no indication that Jesus said “NO” to her at any point.

Thoughts to take home

- ❖ Jesus never uttered any word of insult toward any one. Jesus never sent a person away empty-handed who had any type of need. Jesus never behaved harshly with anyone.
- ❖ “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:21-23)
- ❖ Pain faced without the comfort of Christ is a ***tyrannizing*** force.
- ❖ Pain faced with the comfort of Christ is an ***energizing*** force leading to salvation.

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Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, You are the True God and there is no other God but You. I come to You like the Canaanite woman, seeking healing and salvation. Stretch forth Your powerful arm and save me from the influence of the false gods that surround me. Heal those who are suffering around me, in the same way You healed the daughter of the woman who called upon You as the Christ and Savior, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David". Amen.

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