

Untitled (19)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 August 2020

[0:00] Jesus answered, It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

She said, Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So many of you know my greyhound Beatrice. When we first got Beatrice, she had never lived with a family before.

She was a retired racing dog. That meant a lot of things, but one thing that that meant was that any food that she could reach, she thought of as fair game. She would make a mad dash for whatever it was at every opportunity.

And if you look at her and take a look at me, you're pretty much 100% likely to guess which one of us is faster. It wasn't always just food.

[1:11] One time she got into and drank my blessed oil for anointing the sick. I trust that she was healed. Another time we came home to find that she had eaten a children's Bible.

Elaine remarked that she had apparently read Mark Learned and inwardly digested it. She's come a long way, but we do have to have a gate to keep her out of the kitchen.

Because she is positively tenacious about getting in there and eating any crumbs off the floor that she can find. She just does not give up ever, and it drives us nuts.

In this morning's gospel lesson, the Canaanite woman didn't give up either. She characterized herself as a persistent dog seeking after crumbs, and she went for it.

She was like, oh, she's going to have to have a gate to keep her out of the kitchen. We can learn a lot from her example. And that's what I want us to think about this morning. Please look with me at Matthew chapter 15.

[2:27] Now the first thing that I want us to notice is that this whole account reminds us that Jesus is for absolutely everyone. That might be puzzling when we first look at how she's received.

Picking up in verse 23, Jesus did not answer her a word, and his disciples came and begged him, saying, Send her away, for she is crying out after us. And he answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Now think a little bit about historical context, the context in salvation history at this point. At this point, the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles had not yet been torn down by the cross of Christ.

Jesus had not yet given the apostles the Great Commission, that call to go to all the nations with the gospel. We're not quite there yet.

And still, even so, after acknowledging that reality, what does Jesus do? He receives the woman, he hears her cries for mercy, she trusts in him, and he heals her daughter.

[3:42] Again, this is before the cross and the resurrection. This was before the Great Commission. This was before Pentecost. And still, Jesus does not ultimately turn this woman away, does he?

Want to know something else? Jesus still doesn't turn people away. At the end of the day, Jesus doesn't care who your great-grandfather was.

He doesn't care what country you come from. He doesn't care what language you speak. He doesn't care what religion you grew up in, as long as you come to him in faith and put your trust in him.

Anyone of any background who comes to Jesus will be forgiven for all of their sins and will be adopted into God's family forever.

Just as this Canaanite woman came to Jesus, so can you and I. Even if we are not among the number of the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[4:57] That's the main takeaway from this morning's passage, I think. But I want us to look in more detail now at how this woman approached Jesus and what we can learn from that.

First of all, the Canaanite woman approached Jesus in faith, trusting that he would be willing and able to hear her and help her.

Look at our text, verse 22. Behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.

My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. That sounds like a significant problem, doesn't it? I've never had a daughter be oppressed by a demon.

I will say that the first time that Mia had a night terror, though, that is what I thought was happening. So I charged into her bedroom, flinging holy water. Turns out not to have been anything demonic.

[6:04] When my attempt at driving away the evil spirits had no impact, I turned to Google. And I learned more about night terrors that night. So priest kids have the unique privilege, I guess, of waking from a bad dream, doused in holy water, with dad loudly rebuking the works of Satan.

Anyway, back to the Canaanite woman. This was a serious request, going to Jesus with this concern that her daughter is suffering from demonic oppression.

Can you imagine how awful that must have been? If you were concerned about that, if we were in her shoes, I think it's fair to say that we wouldn't go to just anyone for help.

Not just anyone. I wouldn't. But what we see is that she trusted Jesus with her need, and she believed that he was able to do something about it.

So she goes to him. I don't know about you, but in my life, I am tempted to worry about stuff for a good while before it occurs to me that I might want to talk to the Lord about it.

[7:22] It is so much easier to remember to worry than it is to remember to pray. Sounds ridiculous, but it's true, isn't it?

The Canaanite woman, if she had had that problem at all, she'd clearly gotten past it. She approached Jesus.

She did so in trust. She did so in faith. Faith that Jesus would hear her, and faith that he was able to help her daughter. I would suggest that you and I should remember to approach Jesus in the same way.

When you pray, you pray with the expectation that the Lord is going to hear and care. It is all too easy to pray with the expectation that the Lord won't hear and care.

As a pastor, my calling seems to open the doors to all kinds of interesting conversations with people. A lot of those conversations have a way of repeating themselves.

[8:32] Like, I can't count how many times I've heard stories about people going to confirmation class as kids and hating it. Every time I hear that story, people act as if I should be surprised or something, but I think every teenager hates confirmation class.

That seems to be what that confirmed. I didn't have confirmation class, so I don't know from experience. Well, not as a kid anyway. But here's another one that comes up frequently.

I was really struggling with something. I had a burden in my life. I prayed about it, and God didn't answer me, and God didn't care. I didn't care. I always think a couple of things when I hear that.

We've all had situations in our lives when we've been tempted to feel that way. The first thing I think of is pretty basic and fundamental. I mean, we tend to have a very narrow idea of what God answering our prayers will look like.

He answers in His perfect way, not in our imperfect way, and His way is right even when the answer is not the one we would have chosen. But there's something else, and we notice this from the Canaanite woman particularly, and that is persistence.

[9:55] How often are we persistent in prayer? We all too quickly give up and stop praying when we're in need. The Canaanite woman shows us, keep at it.

At first, Jesus doesn't answer her at all. Next, Jesus says in no uncertain terms that as a Gentile, she needs to understand that He has other things going on.

And still, she continues. What happens? Jesus answered her, O woman, great is your faith.

Be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was healed instantly. Now, we need to be careful not to take the wrong lesson from this.

I've seen situations where people have said or have felt, you know, I prayed to God to miraculously heal me, and it didn't happen. And therefore, I must not have had enough faith.

[10:56] Well, that's a recipe for burdening people who are already struggling. Having faith is no guarantee that our prayers are going to be answered in precisely the way that we are expecting.

But the lesson we take away is to be persistent in prayer. Do not hesitate to go to your loving Lord with your needs. Do not hesitate to go again and again and again.

We could read this account and come to the conclusion that Jesus was just being mean. But I don't think that's the case at all. This Canaanite woman learned to be persistent in prayer and in faith through this experience, and us, 2,000 years later, we learn from her example.

And we also learn something else that is quite valuable from her example. The H word that scares us a bit.

Humility. Look at how she approaches Jesus in humility. She begins, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.

[12:11] She's humbly crying for mercy. Then our text tells us she came and knelt before him saying, Lord, help me. And the way that Jesus responded to that probably stung a little bit.

He answered, It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. He'd already pointed out that she was a Gentile.

She was outside of God's covenant people. And here's the really painful thing. He points out that she is undeserving of his mercy. It says, implies that she is a dog.

Ouch, that hurts, doesn't it? Who would do such a thing? Well, when my mom named me, she named me Caleb, which is Hebrew for dog. Thanks, Mom.

But in all seriousness, I would gladly be the Lord's dog. I am okay with that. And look at how this woman responds.

[13:29] She doesn't get offended and storm off. She doesn't try to argue with Jesus. She acknowledges that she is unworthy, and she acknowledges that even so, she expects Jesus to be merciful to her, unworthy though she is.

She says, Yes, Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. will. Wow.

That's amazing. We're about to say something similar a little further on in the service, aren't we?

We do not presume to come to this your table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your abundant and great mercies.

We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table, but you are the same Lord whose character is always to have mercy.

What can we learn about humility from the Canaanite woman? Well, when we approach the Lord, we do so as those who know ourselves to be unworthy.

[14:50] We are sinners and God is holy. We are unworthy and He is supremely worthy, but here is the thing, we serve a God who loves and saves the unworthy through the blood of His only Son.

The gospel that we believe in is about God's love for the unworthy. So what does that mean? It means that I don't have to walk around with an inflated sense of my own importance, it means that I don't have to justify myself, it means that I don't have to pretend to be better than I am, that I don't have to pretend to have it all together, and neither do you.

Because God welcomes sinners who come to Him through Christ. God invites dogs to take on the family name and eat at the family table.

I'm unworthy to eat the crumbs that fall from His table, and so are you.

Our worthiness isn't why we can come to the Lord's table. We can come because God delights in showing mercy in His Son to the unworthy, because that's who He is.

[16:22] What looks like an insult from this example of the Canaanite woman is actually good news for us. Do you know yourself to be a dog?

Well, good. That means that you are welcome to become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Do you know yourself to be an unworthy sinner? That's good.

Then you are just the kind of person that Jesus died to save. As we've been going through Matthew these past few weeks, we've seen incredible displays of the power and the authority of Jesus.

He can heal the sick. He can miraculously feed a multitude. He can walk on water. He can command the wind and the waves. And He can instantly heal this woman's daughter from demonic oppression.

These accounts were written for us to read, not only so that we can see how powerful Jesus is, but so that we can see what it means that the Jesus who loves us has authority over all things.

[17:40] And isn't that amazing? What does that mean in your life? What does that mean in my life? It means that I can trust Him with anything.

It means that I can trust Him with my body and my soul. I can trust Him with my life. I can trust Him with my death. I can trust Him to be able and willing to forgive my sins through His death on the cross.

And I can trust Him to be able and willing to raise me from the dead on the last day just as He promised. And you can trust Him too.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.