Lent II

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0:00] I think we all have certain saints that we find as great examples or deeply inspirational heroes of the Christian faith.

These saints are Christians throughout history that we believe that we should seek to imitate. They provide us examples of faithfulness. There is Mary, who willingly surrendered herself fully to God. Conceiving and giving birth to our Lord. There's David, who despite his moral failings was a man after God's own heart.
An example of repentance and restoration. And then there's Peter, who although he denied our Lord three times, was restored.
And then given the command and the privilege to feed the flock of God. And of course, there's St. Paul the Apostle for his many letters and his remarkable journeys in spreading the Christian faith abroad.
[1:10] The one saint I've never heard mentioned as one that we should follow is the woman we read about here in our gospel text of Matthew chapter 15.

As a matter of fact, we are never given the name of this persistent woman here in Matthew chapter 15, verses 21 through 28.
We're told that she's a Canaanite. We're told that she's a Canaanite from the region of Tyre and Sidon. Now, Tyre and Sidon was an area filled with wickedness.
And being a Canaanite, well, that was like saying that this woman was from the den of Satan himself. Canaanites had a history of barbaric behavior that I referenced in last week's sermon regarding the people who were inhabiting the promised land.
Some Canaanites practiced child sacrifice as a means of appeasing their god, Moloch. And now we have this Canaanite woman, this lady who carried the stigma of being on the wrong side of the tracks, is now crying out to Jesus.
[2:32] And as a side note, her threefold address, calling Jesus Lord, is exactly what we say in the liturgy in the Kyrie, asking the Lord to have mercy upon us.

But what I want to highlight this morning is this woman's persistence manifested in her faith and in her humility.
This Canaanite woman demonstrates what we should strive to be and to do as people of prayer. This lady kept crying out for mercy.
And she, being a Canaanite, she was a nuisance to the disciples. She was an enemy to them, so much so that they begged Jesus to shut her up.
But she wouldn't stop. Even when Jesus told her that he had come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, she still persisted in asking that the Lord heal her demon-possessed daughter.
[3:45] Our Lord then says, It is not good to take the children's bread and to throw it to the little dogs. And this persistent Canaanite lady responds by saying, Yes, Lord.

Yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table. Our Lord then pronounces to this lady, O woman, great is your faith.
Great is your faith. Let it be to you as you desire. And we read in the text, From that very moment, This woman's daughter was healed.
What I find amazing is that this Canaanite woman was not offended by our Lord's words. Why? Because she was too focused on making sure that our Lord would hear her request, her prayer. She was persistent. She persevered, letting nothing or no one stand in her way. And this lady, this Canaanite woman, this enemy of Israel, is an example to all of us.
[5:08] She's an example of faith. She cried out to Jesus three times, confessing him as Lord. And we read in verse 25 that she worshipped him.

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She gave homage to him. This woman demonstrates what true faith is. Faith is confessing Christ as Lord and worshipping him with our bodies and our souls.
She was not embarrassed. Nor did she worry about what others thought of her. She was simply fixated and focused upon Jesus.
And this is why this Canaanite lady is worthy to be in the mix of those saints that we honor.
This Canaanite woman represents what we should all be striving to do and to be as Christians. We are called to cry out to God in all of our hurt and all of our pain.
[6:16] And we should be persistent in prayer even when it seems as though no answer is coming our way. And being a person of faith means caring less about what others think, but engaging God with great persistence.

Being a Christian means coming to God with reverence and also tenacity. Our focus should be fixated upon Jesus, not ourselves, and not upon what others think of us.
Therefore, dear friends, let this Canaanite woman, this saint, be an example to all of us.
And may we come to the throne of God with humility, with faith, and with boldness. Confessing Jesus as Lord and asking him to have mercy upon us.
Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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