



21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. 23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. 24 But he answered and said, **I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** 25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 26 But he answered and said, **It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.** 27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table¹. 28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, **O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.** And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matthew 15:21-28)

This miracle is also recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark, chapter 7.

When we listen to the voice of Christ with any measure of faith, our little faith cannot but grow larger.

Here, our Lord has gone out of the bounds of Israel and out from the people of his own country to a country that is not recognized by the Jews as a people of God. But that which man may not recognize as worthy of God's love and compassion may, in fact, be dear to His heart and uppermost in His intentions. We read of a Canaanite woman who approaches Christ with the familiarity of a fellow Jew, knowing the title of

¹ This is the Scripture from which the Prayer of Humble Access on Page 82 of the Book of Common Prayer is drawn which is said during Holy Communion:

WE do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merci- ful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

the promised Messiah – thou Son of David! And she also calls Him Lord. How this woman came to know about Christ is a mystery. There perhaps very many who know the Lord of whom we have little knowledge.

But this woman approaches Him with firm faith and no little courage. She no doubt loves her little daughter above all else. This great love has given her ghostly strength and indomitable courage to speak. It is also her only hope for ridding her daughter of the wicked devil which no doubt vexes her night and day.

“Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

Love is a powerful force. We are told in Proverbs 10:12 that *“love covereth ALL sins.”* And we are assured in Romans 8:38-39 that love is even stronger than death itself. So this woman comes as a beggar, albeit a bold one, to Christ. She seems to have already rehearsed her responses to his possible rejection of her petition.

Christ gave no audible answer perhaps to draw out the depth of faith of this stranger of the people of Israel.

Now, please observe how the disciples, just as in times past, attempt to keep this poor woman from approaching Christ. It is a familiar scene in which those closest to Christ wish to exclude others who are in dire need of His mercy – the little children in Matthew 19:13, blind Bartemeus over in Mark 10:48, and then there were the crowds who pressed on Him making the approach of the woman taken with an issue of blood so difficult that she had to crawl beneath the crowd just to touch His garment. It is often those of us who make up the church and people of God who are the greatest barriers for others in coming to Christ.

How does Jesus respond to this lady and to the objections of the disciples? ***I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*** Jesus came to save that which was lost. That was you and I before ever we received the rich mercies and grace of Christ. Christ has allowed this woman to hear His voice. Her faith grows, and her determination to get a healing for her daughter is unabated.....

Her desire to save her daughter is now growing into a thirst for the Bread Christ offers. Though she once believed from a distance, she is now hearing His very voice. The more we listen and know Him, the more we are drawn into His love and grace. This woman is not unlike the woman taken in adultery who, although never uttering a word in her defense, nevertheless heard the loving authority in the voice of Jesus above the cruel and hateful voices of her accusers.

And she is like unto the woman at Jacob’s Well who, even coming with little or no faith, feels that faith grow into a tsunami of tidal waters as she leaves the well without the water she came to fetch, but in possession of the water came to her by grace and love.

*Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, **It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.*** This woman has seen much heartache and continual despondency. Though her opportunity to know God is diminished by her neighborhood, yet the very calamity that worries her is also the very means by which she is drawn to Christ.

Christ is not demeaning the woman with his comment of the children’s bread,

but He is looking into a heart that is ripe for harvest and full of faith. He knows it. Now He will demonstrate to those who doubt that this woman has greater faith than perhaps many already of His own company. The woman did not disappoint - ***Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*** The troubled woman is desperate for Christ. If necessary, she is perfectly willing to be a dog if it means she will have the favor of Christ.

Better to be a dog for Christ than a Queen for Satan! And this woman will prefer the crumbs from the abundant table of Christ to dainty poisons from the trough of Satan. Even crumbs are still bread! She is proud to sit as a dog beneath the table and simply beg for the crumbs of Living Bread which the children at the table austere pass down. Such crumbs may not be much in number, but they convey life in the smallest particle.

Christ, unlike those around Him, sees an open heart. This is a heart which proclaims "You may have me as a dog if you prefer, but at any cost, let me have the Bread of Life which you hold in abundance!" Even with this seeming humiliation, she is not disparaged. She now comes and worships Him. Like Job of the Old Testament – ***"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"***

She will not be disappointed. She will come to Christ no matter the shame or ridicule of those around her. All the while, she is hearing more and more the voice of the Great Lord and merciful Redeemer. Her desires are not instantly gratified, but she persists in her prayer.

The sinews and bones of our breasts cannot hide the beauty of a faithful heart from the omniscience of God. Unlike the mortal eye which observes only the outward appearance in a single instant of time, His eyes look into our very being. And His span of vision tells Him not only who we may presently be, but who we may eternally become in Him!

The purpose of Christ in allowing this strong expression of faith to be known is now complete! ***Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.***

Her faithful patience has borne fruit and her daughter is freed from the living hell which drew her mother to Christ. Though our prayers may seem to be unheard, we persist at the feet of Christ. He may love us more than we can understand. His great love for us may preclude the instant answer which we seek.

So we wait upon the Lord for His time and for His wise grant of our petition. And even when the answer is 'NO, our blessings will be multiplied by that better thing He shall grant for the good of our souls.