

11 S. after Pentecost 8/16/20
Matthew 15:21-28 A

“LORD, HELP ME!”

“[God] said, ‘Take your son, your only-begotten son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him that as a burnt offering’” (Ge 22:2).

“And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day” (Ge 32:24).

“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turn away from evil?...Behold, all that he has is in your hand’” (Job 1:8,12).

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done’...And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lk 22:42, 44).

Dear Saints of God, it is unsettling to realize that many of our fiercest struggles and greatest battles are with God Himself. Abraham was assaulted with God's demand to sacrifice Isaac. Jacob wrestled with God in order to receive a Word of blessing and was given the strength of body to prevail and the faith of the soul to await that blessing. Job was afflicted in body and soul. He asks a simple "Why?" and, as we heard in our reading last Sunday, is then questioned by God. And Jesus? Our Lord Himself, true man, born of the Virgin Mary, was in such agony that He sweat drops of blood.

Such a trial was no less for the woman in our Gospel reading. This poor woman was tested by God, she struggled with Him, and yet, even in the midst of disappointment, she refused to give up or give in. Our Gospel reading teaches us that faith clings to the God's Word of Promise and that

nothing is to keep us from calling upon the Lord our God and holding Him to His Word, even when He appears to be against us and when His answer is "No."

Think about this for a minute: What hope did this woman have? She was a sinner, and she knew it. She was not a Jew, and she knew it. She had a demon-possessed daughter and she could do nothing about it. But, she had one other thing -- the Word of God. That Word taught her that Jesus had mercy on sinners and that Word produced faith in her so that she hoped and trusted in that mercy of Christ.

In our Gospel, Jesus holds before us the faith of this Canaanite woman. Jesus is teaching His disciples and us that the only way to come to Him is by faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (He 11:6).

"Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district to Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from the region came out and was crying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon'" (vv 21-22).

This woman had heard of Jesus. The Good News of Jesus' mercy had spread through Tyre. Last week, Paul taught us that that faith comes by hearing the Word, the Good News of Jesus Christ (cf. Ro 10:17). She had heard. And that word had created faith in her and she came to Christ in faith.

The Evangelist Matthew records for us, the Son of David's response to her plea, "He did not answer her a word" (v. 23). It would appear to our human reason that He is unwilling to answer this woman's simple and pious request. Jesus Himself promised,

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened" (Mt 7:7-8).

She asked, but did not receive. She sought, but did not find. She knocked, but far from being opened, the door seemed locked to her prayers.

When He spoke, He said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v. 24). It is true, Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the Israel, the Jews. But, it was always God's desire and plan that Christ would be the Savior of the nations, Jews and Gentiles. Even though He came first to the Jews, it did not mean that He will cast away the Gentiles who come to Him in faith.

By faith, this Canaanite woman believes all she had heard of Jesus. She clings to the Word she had heard of Jesus. Once more she intercedes on behalf of her daughter, "Lord, help me" (v. 25)!

Jesus replied to her with the words of a popular proverb of the Jews of Jesus' day, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (v. 26). Jesus was not insulting her. The word Jesus uses here is that of a loved, cared for, household pet. When, the woman hears Jesus call her that, she knows she has him where she wants Him. She does not despair, but agrees with His judgment and concedes that before Almighty God, she deserves only the love and care that a beloved household pet deserves; namely, that she may eat the crumbs that fall from the table of the Lord.

What hope did this woman have? She had the sure and certain Word of God's mercy on sinners. What hope do we have? We have that same Word. We are sinners. We cannot earn God's forgiveness by our own merits or worthiness. We are destined for death and the grave and we can do nothing about it. But, we have the Word. We learn, once again, in the life and witness of this Canaanite women that we are not to think of God according to our human reason and senses, nor the emotion and feeling of

the moment. We walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Co 5:7). Faith, that no matter what we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, God has mercy on us in Jesus Christ.

What happens when you pray? What happens when you, with confidence, draw near to God's throne of grace, to receive mercy and find grace to help in your time of need? Does it seem though you ask, you do not receive? Does it seem though you seek, you do not find? Does it seem that you knock upon the door of heaven, but far from being open, the door seems locked to you?

When we feel our prayers go unanswered, even unheard, let us learn from this woman. What do you do when it seems to our human reason and senses that God is **silent**? We beg. We cry to Him in faith, for even the crumbs of His mercy are good enough.

Our lesson this morning can be a more difficult lesson to understand. But, it teaches us this: God does not treat us as our sins deserve. He treats us in love, love that caused Him to send His Son to be our Savior. Jesus died for one and all. Jesus went to the cross for the lost sheep of Israel, for the Canaanites, and for you. When He did, He died to take away all the curse of sin -- your sickness, disease, loss, heartache, regret, guilt, shame, worry, and fear. All that gets in your way of saying, "I can trust Jesus no matter what."

Jesus took it all that away from you and, in the new birth of Holy Baptism, created faith in your heart, faith that clings to Jesus no matter what – sun or rain, good days and bad days.

We see ourselves in that Canaanite woman, don't we? Our cries to God, especially in the hour of trial, may not be answered as we would have them according to our wants and desires. When our Lord denies our

requests and tells us "no," we sometimes become tired by the delay, even angry at the silence. But, we don't give up. Faith always looks to Jesus, trusts in Jesus, is comforted in Jesus. Faith trusts that He will feed you with even the crumbs of His grace, which will strengthen you, to get you through the darkness of today.

Faith knows He will feed you in His own good time and in His own good way, in the way and time He knows best. Don't take my word for it. Ask the Canaanite woman. Or better yet, ask her daughter.