16 August 2020 Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church
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"Lord! Save! (And He Does!) - Part 2"
Text: Matthew 15:21-28

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lord, save! That was the cry of Peter last week. And that is really the cry of the Canaanite woman we hear about this week as well, though she does not use those exact words. But that's what she's asking. *Lord, save!* My daughter. Who is ***severely oppressed by a demon***.

Two weeks, two cries, the same cry, really. But a difference, too. Last week, the one who cried out had a little faith where we could have expected a great faith. And this week, the one who cries out has a great faith where we could have expected a little faith. How often things get topsy-turvy when Jesus is around. He hangs out with sinners, not religious leaders. He praises those who repent, not those who think they're good. And it is a disciple - and one of His inner circle! - who has a little faith, while a Canaanite woman has great faith.

If you ever think you have Jesus all figured out . . . better think again.

So, I was thinking . . . what if this woman and her daughter had been in the boat with the disciples last week? Last week, Peter jumped out. This week, it's more like the daughter had gotten thrown out of the boat, or was pushed by the unseen hand, the unseen spirit, that was oppressing her. In either case, her mother cries out as Peter did: *Lord, save! My daughter is sinking!*

The first response is, well, no response. Nothing. Nada. Jesus may not have even looked at her.

That's frustrating, right? Not to be heard. It's the cause of so much unrest in our country today. People feel they are not being heard. And so they are rising up in anger. Making their voice be heard in rioting and rebellion. We won't be ignored. And this woman could have done the same. *Hey! Don't ignore me! You a chauvinist or something? I have a right to be heard!*

Uh, no. No you don't. Not before God. In a country with a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, maybe so. But before God we have no such right. We

forfeited that when we decided sin was the way we wanted to live. That without God and His Word was the way we wanted to live. A choice you and I continue to make today when we sin. So if God hears you, it's not because you have a right to be heard. It's because of His grace and mercy.

Which this woman knows. In that culture, at that time, as a woman and a Gentile among Jews, she was probably used to being ignored. So she's not offended or indignant. But she also doesn't give up . . .

Lord, save! My daughter is sinking!

She gets a response this time. But not from Jesus - from His disciples. Lord, ***send her away, for she is crying out after us***. That always sounded to me like the disciples just wanted to be rid of her. But Luther didn't interpret it that way, and Jesus' answer doesn't make sense if that is the case. For in response to the disciples, Jesus says: ***I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*** Like, I *would* help, *but* . . .

So Luther interpreted this as the disciples interceding for her. For often times, when Jesus would send someone away, it was because He granted their request. So here, it would seem, are the disciples trying to help. For Jesus said, after all, *ask, and it will be given to you*. And, *wherever two or three are gathered in my name . . .*

Ah yes, those promises are true enough, Jesus seems to be saying. **But only for Israel, not for her**.

But still she doesn't give up. She is like a child. For children are persistent. They keep asking until they get what they want. Please? No. Please? No. Please? No. Please? No. Please? And what parent hasn't heard why? why? why? why? why? It's when children begin to get older, and when we become adults, that we change. We figure out ways to manipulate, to get around, to undermine, to bargain, to rationalize, to argue. And we do that with God sometimes, don't we? But this woman's like a child. She doesn't do any of that. She just cries out again: *Lord, save! My daughter is sinking!*

And isn't that what Jesus tells us to do? To be like little children . . .

But then, Jesus says, ***It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.*** That is an offensive remark for many. How could Jesus say such a thing! But again, the Canaanite woman is not offended. In fact, *she agrees*. She could have objected, stomped her foot in outrage, and said: *Hey! Canaanite lives matter!* But she doesn't. Instead she says ***yes***. And, if I may say, **happily so!** For yes, she'll be a dog - she'll be a dog <u>if</u> she can be HIS dog. She did not belong to Israel. Yes, True. Indeed. You are right, she says. I'll be a dog. *Your* dog. So I can have the crumbs. Because a crumb from Jesus is worth more than all the feasting of the world. Whatever she gets will be completely undeserved.

All grace. And she'll gladly take that.

For that's the way of it with faith.

Faith doesn't make demands of God. When we do, that's not faith talking, but something else in us . . .

Faith doesn't think it has rights. When we think we do, that God owes us something, that's not faith talking . . .

Faith doesn't get indignant or offended with God, as if He were somehow belittling us. If we think He is, that we're not getting the recognition or the rewards we deserve, that's not faith talking . . .

That is the way and the language and the thinking of the world. We have rights. We have dignity. We deserve certain things and certain treatment. And we hear that so much, we're so bombarded with that message . . . and maybe that's true when it comes to the world. **But not with God.** To think that way with God is to think that life is something that is ours, that we have, in and of ourselves, and *then* we add can God to it . . . *if* we want; *if* and *when* we think He can somehow add to it and make it better. But if He gets in the way, or doesn't do according to what we think . . . well, then God's in the wrong.

But that's topsy-turvy thinking. There isn't your life and *then* God. There isn't your life and then you can invite God into it . . . or not. There isn't a life that belongs to you apart from God. There's God and *then* your life. He's the reality. He's the source. He's the sustainer. For those who realize it and acknowledge it, and for those who do not. All that you are, all that you have, all that you can hope for, **is from Him**.

So it takes a Canaanite woman, this very unlikely place of great faith, to be our teacher. To teach us of faith and the language of faith. That faith isn't proud, but humble. That faith doesn't make demands, that faith doesn't insist on its rights, that faith doesn't accuse God - faith simply says: ***yes, Lord***.

Yes, Lord, I am a dog. Yes, Lord, I am a sinner. Yes, Lord, I deserve nothing.

But faith doesn't stop there. Not a child-like faith. Faith keeps going. Not demanding on the basis of who we are, but asking and *insisting* on the basis of who God is, and what He has told us in His Word.

That **yes, Lord**, I am a dog, a sinner, and deserve nothing. But **yes, Lord**, You came for people like me. You came to have mercy. You came to save. Because of who *You* are. Because You are love. Because You give. Because You desire all to live in You. *So I'm askin'!* Just for the crumbs, which I don't even deserve. But a crumb from you is worth

more than everything in the world, all the recognition of the world, all the riches in the world. Just a crumb of mercy . . . *Lord, save!*

And then it is Jesus' turn to say **yes**. And to give much more than crumbs. Because Jesus gives Himself. All of Himself, for you. For when you come to the altar to receive His Body and Blood, what is this but a crumb compared to the food we feast on each and every day? And yet here is food that is worth more than all that. Far more. For receiving a crumb, you receive all of Jesus, *the Bread of Life*. Here you receive His life, His death, His cross, His forgiveness, His resurrection, His salvation, His kingdom, His Sonship. All that He is and has done for you is here for you . . . in these crumbs that are far more than crumbs.

Now, are you worthy to receive such a gift? No. And **yes**. **No**, if you base your worth in you - who you are and what you have done. But **yes** if you come as an undeserving sinner-dog who says *Lord, have mercy. Lord, save!* For then great is *your* faith, that says **yes** to our Lord and His Word and His promises.

Sometimes, though, our problem isn't **what** God gives or **how** God gives but **when** God gives. Last week, with Peter, Jesus *immediately* reached out and grabbed Peter after the first peep out of his mouth. But today, Jesus doesn't. He waits. He treats Peter and this woman differently. Why? Jesus' chauvinism rearing its ugly head, again? No. But because they *are* different. Jesus doesn't deal with everyone the same. We sometimes think He should, that what He does for one He should do for all; that He should be equal and fair. But once again, *that's not faith talking* . . .

Because love doesn't treat everyone the same. Love regards each person and their needs uniquely. Parents love all their children the same but do not treat them the same. Because they're different. They have different needs, respond in different ways. And parents know that. Children think that's not fair, just as we sometimes think God's not being fair. But parents know - God knows - that's love.

And faith responds: **yes, Lord**. Faith that is confident in Jesus and His love. His love shown by His coming for us. His love shown by His dying for us.

And then such faith, receiving from Jesus, enlivened by Jesus, fed by Jesus, confident in Jesus, does the same for others. What we have passively received we actively give. Love, mercy, forgiveness. To the dogs and those who treat us as dogs. To the sinners and those who sin against us. To the undeserving - not just those who can repay us. For that is the way of it with Jesus, who lives in you and you in Him.

O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.

This woman wasn't great, she was nothing. We know nothing about her before this; we

know nothing about her after this. But we know this: **her Jesus is great**. And that's what makes faith great - not it's strength, but the strength of the one it's *in*. When you are weak, He is strong. And when He is strong, your faith is great. And it will be done for you as you desire. Not what your old, sinful, worldly, greedy, selfish heart desires, but what your new, clean, baptized heart desires: **Jesus**. And He will be given to you: His life. And hope. And confidence. Which is a right-side-up life, in a topsy-turvy world.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.