

Matthew 15:21-28

I believe that everyone here today has great faith. The only question we have to ask is, in what? When you sat down in your chair, I am willing to bet that none of you wondered, even just a little, “Is this chair going to hold me? Or “Am I going to fall?” You simply plopped your behind down and went about your business. You didn’t even think about it because there was no doubt in your mind. But when it comes to Jesus, do you have the same level of faith? In our passage today, we find someone who has exactly that level of faith in Jesus. Is it one of the disciples, or a Jew, or maybe someone that has seen one of Jesus’ miracles? Nope. In fact, this believer comes from a pretty unlikely place. And it’s all because of their faith they are able to be a part of an amazing miracle and see the power of Almighty God and experience his saving grace.

Jesus took his disciples and got out of town and went to the west coast to the area of Tyre and Sidon. And we’re told that a Canaanite woman, from that vicinity, came out to see Jesus. Not only is this woman a Canaanite, an enemy of Israel, but also being from that area meant that she was from a pagan society for they did not worship the god of Israel but worshiped evil gods like Baal, Asherah, and Molech. Among their acts of worship was child sacrifice, where they would build a fire beneath the hands of a bronze statue of their god Molech, and when the hands were glowing red they would sacrifice their babies by placing them onto the searing hot metal. This is the culture this woman is from and sets the scene we’re about to see.

This woman realized her deep need. Her daughter was being tormented by a demon and there was nothing she could do about it. But she had a special opportunity because Jesus was

in town and that didn’t happen very often. As she cried out, she called Jesus, “Lord.” This shows her reverence for Jesus. The she calls Jesus, the “Son of David,” acknowledging him as the Messiah. It’s interesting that she recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and she’s not even a Jew, while the Jewish religious leaders refused to acknowledge Jesus for who he really is. I think we can learn something from this. This woman saw her situation and she realized that she in trouble and had a great need. A need that she couldn’t solve by herself and so she cried out to Jesus.

As Christians, when we first come to believe in Jesus we too recognize our need. Our need for the forgiveness of our sins and the only place we can get that from is Jesus and so we cry out to him. But over time we begin to forget how much we need Jesus. As we begin to follow God there is a tendency to become more self-reliant and self-righteous. We begin to rely on ourselves and think that if we do the right things then we are ok and we kind of become numb to our need. But our sin never goes away just because we start to do the right things, we still need Jesus. But because we are doing better, doing more right things than wrong, our perception of ourselves changes and we begin to think that we’re better than we really are.

That’s the danger of being self-righteous. We must always see ourselves for who we really are, sinners before the Almighty God. Continuing on, she cried, “have mercy on me,” even though she wasn’t the one that was sick. This shows the love she had for her daughter. As a parent I understand her. If my child was suffering like this, I would rather take their place than to see them suffer. This woman was suffering along with her daughter. Her love for her daughter enabled her bring this problem to Jesus but it was her faith that saved her daughter.

It's here that I'd like to think a little more about faith and specifically about this woman's faith. In the Bible there seems to be different levels of faith. Counterfeit faith, no faith, little faith and great faith. Counterfeit faith can be seen through the demon that possessed this woman's daughter. James tells us even the demons believe in Jesus and tremble (James 2:19). Demons believe in the reality of God, the authority of God, the power of God and the Holiness of God, but their belief does not affect their 'heart' resulting in submission and obedience to God. It is a 'counterfeit' unfruitful faith and Satan is content to have many church goers sharing in this faith.

The next level is no faith. This can be seen in the Pharisees who did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. The next level is little faith. Examples of this can be seen in:

1. Mt 6:30 – Sermon on the mount - If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?
2. Mt 8:26 - Jesus calms the storm - He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.
3. Mt 14:31 Peter on the water - Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”
4. Mt 16:8 – Crossing the lake - Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?”
5. Mt 17:20 – Mustard seed - He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from

here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

The next level up is simply faith. Example are:

1. Mt 9:2 – Friends of the paralytic - Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”
2. Mt 9:22 – The bleeding woman - Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.
3. Mt 9:29 – The blind men - Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”

And the last and highest level is great faith. Examples of this are:

1. This woman had great faith
2. Mt 8:10 – The centurion - When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

I believe that because of this woman's great faith she was not going to be stopped from helping her daughter. As I mentioned she was a Canaanite woman and because she had a bad, ungodly and sinful, background, she could have let that stop her from coming to Jesus, but she didn't let that hinder her.

Likewise, sometimes we let our past sinful history keep us from going to God thinking that we are too sinful. The devil tries to accuse us and make us paralyzed. We must have faith that when we sincerely confess our sins and repent (1 Jn 1:9) we

are saved and washed clean, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11).

What happened next, take a look at verse 23. “Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.””

When the Lord gave her the silent treatment, with her great faith she didn't let that stop her. Jesus didn't ignore The Gerasene demoniac, Zacchaeus, or anyone else but Jesus ignored her, why? I believe that it may be because Jesus was testing her faith. Generally, we want our prayers answered quickly. We want to get out of the fire fast but it's the fire that refines us. Sometimes we understand better after the test, even if we fail it. Do you ever feel like God is giving you the silent treatment, that he is not hearing your prayers? What we should learn from this is that we should quit on God when he seems like he isn't answering our prayers. He may be working on something for you.

As she was crying out to Jesus and he was ignoring her, his disciples wanted her to be sent away. This was the disciples normal M.O. This woman wasn't getting any sympathy from them. This woman could have walked away because she wasn't getting sympathy.

“²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”” It appears that Jesus is really giving her a hard time, so then what did she do? Take a look at verse 25. “The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.” She got up and fell down in front of him and worshipped him. She was a pagan, but she worshipped Jesus.

(What does it take for you to stop going to church? Has anyone ever disappointed you and you wanted to leave?)

What happened next, take a look at verse 26. “²⁶ He replied, “It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.”” She was insulted. Basically, Jesus called her a dog. What would you do if someone insulted you? In our sensitive era, people just wouldn't you want to leave, but they would come back and attack for being insulted.

But how did this woman respond? “²⁷ “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.” She demonstrated humility. She agreed with Jesus and said, “Yes, you're right, I am a dog.” (truth be told is someone says, we don't deserve a,b,c, you know what, they're right, we don't deserve what God has given us.) V27, In her answer, she said “true, but even the dogs deserve the crumbs,” She was willing to take even the leftovers, even if it was just a crumb. No pretence, We might have said to Jesus, “who do you think you are?” But this woman knew who Jesus was, and she humbled herself before the LORD.

Take a look at verse 28. “²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.” Jesus responded with an exclamation point! Great is your faith! And this woman's daughter was healed at that very moment. Jesus never said this to the Jews, and actually he never even said this to his disciples, at least you would think he would have said it to them, but no, he said why did you doubt. Are you so dull?

In conclusion through this passage I learn a few things about faith. Romans 1:17 tells us, “For in the gospel the righteousness

of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” From this woman I understand better the meaning of “The righteous will live by faith.” Her great faith enabled her to act boldly, while little faith is stifled by fear. Her great faith helped her to focus on the spiritual world while little faith focuses on the material world.

Her great faith helped her to make a decision based on what was possible by God while little faith makes decisions based on what we can see. Her great faith helped her to save her daughter.

There is one thing I'd like you to remember from this passage, when Jesus said the children get the bread, do you know what we are? We are Jesus' children and that means that we don't have to beg for crumbs because Jesus takes care of his children. This is only by the grace of God because all of us are sinners deserving punishment but because of what Jesus did for us, when he died on the cross, he took our sins upon himself saving us from God's wrath. And thus we have been grafted in to be a child of God. However, we must have faith in Jesus to do so. For “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb 11:6). We must put our faith into action, trust in Jesus, and live according to his will.

AMEN