

Even crumbs can be enough

Matthew 15:21-28

Good morning and welcome to worship on this Lords day. Today is of course a very special day, it is national woman's day, a day of celebration and a day to reflect upon the great sacrifices of so many strong and wonderful women across this incredible land. On this day, we lift you up to the Lord. We thank Him for each one of you and we thank you for the sacrifices you have made for us – Mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, women everywhere who are unable to bare children, those who have lost children, women who have sacrificed of themselves without expecting anything in return, those who freely given of their love – we thank you.

Our call to worship is taken from Psalm 143:8-12

Opening Song: Great is Thy Faithfulness - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErwiBz1QA4o>

Matthew 15:21-28

21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

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."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

27 "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

28 Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

This particular story in the life of Jesus comes at such an amazing point – it follows on from Jesus teaching on *clean and unclean*. Remembering that the disciples are accused by the Pharisees of having a disregard for the traditions of the elders because they do not wash their hands before they eat, and when Jesus addresses their concerns and their accusations, He teaches that being truly clean is not a matter of external appearance, it is not a matter of human tradition nor is it a matter of having some elevated social and political standing. Rather, Jesus makes it clear that what makes one either clean or unclean is determined by what is on the inside, it is what comes out of the person meaning what is in the heart.

Following His encounter with the Pharisees, Jesus and His disciple retreated to the region of Tyre and Sidon, and it is at this point that we see Him followed this Canaanite woman who repeatedly calls out to Him with a request to heal her daughter. Now to a lot of us, we fail to understand the gravity of this particular moment because it speaks to a very specific cultural and political situation. What we must realise firstly is that when they retreat to the region of Tyre and Sidon, this is not a region designated for any self-respecting Jew. It is a region for the Gentiles, for pagans, largely know for its specific worship of foreign gods. Secondly, The woman's designation as a Canaanite marks this not only a gender issue but

hugely as a cultural problem as well. In both instances, whether from a geographical or cultural perspective, it is undoubtedly a reference to the enemies of Israel. And yet we see that even from the so-called enemies can come faith enough to warrant a response from God.

You'll notice that when she calls out to Jesus, she says, "*Lord! Son of David...*" Now of course the term Lord may be used simply as a sign of respect towards someone of power and this is entirely possible, yet the term is justified almost, with a very specific Jewish title given to Jesus, the Son of David. The supposed enemy of Israel, a pagan, a Gentile who more than likely was a worshipper of some foreign, if not multiple foreign, gods, still recognises who Jesus truly is... More than what the Pharisees and teachers of the Law did. And yet what is remarkable is the response she receives.

Initially we see that Jesus doesn't respond to her cry at all and yet she persists so much so that the disciples ask Jesus to send her away. But He does not. Instead He engages with her and begins to explain what is at the heart of His ministry. We know from countless Old Testament passages that the Gospel of Christ was to be given first to the Jews, and this is what Jesus explains. It is greatly emphasised by Jesus when He firstly says to her that He has come only for the lost sheep of Israel and then says to her that it is not right to throw the children's bread to the dogs. Jesus' emphasis with both of these statements is on the will of the Father and the necessity of offering salvation to the very people of God who have rejected Him.

When the woman here Jesus' response, notice that she doesn't fight Him on it, she doesn't simply turn around and walk away, despondent and downcast – she acknowledges Jesus' statement, she understood what He meant as well as the implications of His purpose. And yet she persists in her cause and her cry, willing to settle even for scraps, for the crumbs not even given specifically to the dogs but those that they scavenge off the floor. Why? Well I believe that she, in her understanding of who Jesus was, knew that even the crumbs of this faith, the slightest call to God could be met with a response from God. And of course because of her faith, healing was brought about.

How often do we take for granted the faith that we have? How often do we take for granted the fact that a little faith is all that is required of us? Jesus, in the parables, speaks about a faith the size of a mustard seed that can bring about cosmological and geographical change. Never mind faith the size of a mustard seed, what about simply holding onto crumbs which are supposedly good for nothing other than being wiped off the table and scavenged upon by the dogs... We cannot underestimate the fact that even a broken, despised and rejected spirit, with the crumbs of faith, can be healed, it can be set free, it can experience restoration, redemption and salvation.

I remember reading this quote the other day which said, "**True faith is faith in the waiting – when circumstances remain unchanged, but belief remains steadfast.**" That is all the Lord requires, and that is an amazing hope for use, that even crumbs are enough.

Let us pray.

Song of praise: Come Thou Fount – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njftoak5w5g>

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