

Demons? Really?
Matthew 15:21-28

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever really considered this text? Yes, we will focus upon the woman's faith, but have you ever really considered all of it? What I mean is, do you recall why the woman came to Jesus in the first place? Here's what she said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."

You know what most people think? "Demon? Really? They were just backwater folks back then, they really didn't understand diseases and stuff. What the daughter had was some disease. In that day, demon possession was what they labeled diseases they didn't understand, like epilepsy, or maybe she was schizophrenic, or bi-polar."

No, she was demon possessed. We fail to believe that is really what happened, for we have been conditioned not to believe in such things. Oh, everybody believes in angels. There are some who falsely believe that people become angels. Whatever people may believe, no Christian doubts the existence of angels.

Demons however, that is a different matter. People may believe in Satan, the devil, but to believe in demons? No! Many people seem to run up against a wall of doubt when it comes to belief in demons. And more especially, people really doubt that demon possession takes place. But, if we are careful to read the Scriptures, we have numerous accounts in the Scriptures where people were demon possessed. Jesus cast out demons, and so did the apostles.

In fact, the first ones to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, were demons. Luke records the event in his fourth chapter of his Gospel.

And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. (Luke 4:33-35)

In the first chapter of Mark's Gospel, we read this account with demons.

That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. (Mark 1:32-34)

In the beginning, God made angels. He made them all perfect, without sin or evil. But, we know that some of them rebelled against God. They are the fallen angels, or demons, Satan being their leader. These fallen angels, these demons, are many and powerful. They are actively trying to overthrow the mankind, so that they too might join them eternally in their torment.

Today, they are active still. Those who look to mediums or spiritists to speak to their deceased

loved ones, are not speaking to their loved ones at all. Instead, mediums are conversing with spiritual beings who were present during the lives of their loved ones, present but unseen. Spiritual beings who want them not to trust in God, demons who pose as their loved ones. Yes, the minions of the father of lies, Satan, are indeed powerful and deceptive.

Another of their ploys is to act as spirit guides to those who empty themselves of all thoughts in meditation. They will come into those looking for spirit guides and appear as friendly creatures. I know of someone who dabbled with meditation and their spirit guide appeared in their mind as a unicorn. Yes, demons are indeed deceptive in their attempts to lead people astray. This is one way in which demons are invited into the hearts and minds of people.

There are demon possessions that take place today, they even work through and possess games like the Ouiji board. But most people are desensitized to such things. We've watched horror movies, *The Exorcist*, *Carrie* or the remake, and others, and we see them as fiction. Scary, but fiction. For some reason there are many who take great delight in being scared, they enjoy the adrenaline rush of such movies. So, we know these movies are fiction. People do not want to believe they exist in real life. We don't want to believe such vile evil exists. And, since they exist only in fiction – because I have never seen them – it is easy to believe that demons don't exist.

I am not telling you these things to scare you, but to make you aware. Those who are careful and watching, are those who will be prepared when confronted by evil. There are some who have personal experience in these matters, even in our own midst today. While they are living testimonies to the truth of what I am explaining, they are even more, living testimonies to the way in which such demons are easily defeated.

What is more, we can learn how it is done from our Gospel lesson for today. Were you listening to the text? In our text today, we see victory over demons. No, there is no need for the might of militaristic arms. Christ Himself is the victory over Satan.

A Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Last week we heard of the temptation of Jesus. Satan tried every trick in the book, even quoting the Scriptures. Jesus sent him packing with his tail between his legs. Throughout his life, Satan tempted Jesus to turn away from His task. He tempted Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to not go through with God's plan, Jesus' suffering and death. On Good Friday, when the temple's veil was torn in two, Satan must have thought he was victorious. He'd deceived the Sanhedrin for years, finally leading them to have Jesus crucified. The demons must have rejoiced in great glee.

It was the foreknowledge of His coming victory that Jesus speaks with this woman of great faith.

It is knowing full well that He will institute a wonderful meal of his own body and blood, a meal through which He will bestow to believers who partake of it, the great benefits He will purchase with His suffering and death. "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Knowing that the least of God's gifts bestow great blessing, this woman has come before Jesus. She has come, for she believes that even a word from Christ is able to overcome and defeat Satan. "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

She is absolutely correct in her estimation of God's power, and the riches of His grace. Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Dearly beloved of God, the threats of Satan, the might and power of his demons, is nothing before the Son of God. Yes, we struggle in this world, but that is only the outward facade of the greater struggle. *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* (Ephes. 6:12 ESV)

But, we have no fear, the victory is already won. Christ defeated Satan upon the cross. He descended and proclaimed His victory. On the third day He rose to proclaim His victory complete and give us a glimpse of our own resurrection.

In our text, we are given a reminder of how that victory comes to us. Even the crumbs from the master's table are enough to give us strength and victory over the devil's temptations in our life.

We need not disbelieve in the spiritual forces of darkness, for they have no power over us. You are baptized into Christ. Not crumbs, but simple water. You can proclaim against Satan, I am baptized. Christ has claimed me and made me His own. He is my strength and my salvation.

You want further strength? Come to the Lord's table. There, you receive more than crumbs falling from the Master's table. You are the invited guests of honor. You are the children seated at the table. You are given the full meal, the food and drink of eternal life. Christ's body and blood strengthen your faith and fill you with Christ. There is no room or place for Satan. Christ makes you His own.

No, the meal may not appear like much. It may only be a thin wafer and a sip of wine, but it is the master's table - it is His body and blood - given for us Christians to eat and to drink. It does bestow great blessings.

You are here to receive great blessings from God. Be it done for you as you desire. Amen.