

**In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent (Reminiscere) (2022)**

**Gifted by God Through Prayer**

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***“Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.” (Matthew 15:28, ESV)***

In the Gospel Reading for today, St. Matthew says, ***“Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon,” (Matthew 15:21, ESV)*** but he doesn't tell us from where Jesus withdrew. He had been in Gennesaret, a community southwest of Capernaum, healing the sick (Matt. 14:34-36) and after these healings, St. Matthew tells us of a confrontation between Jesus and some Pharisees. The Pharisees were upset because our Lord's disciples were breaking with tradition by not washing their hands prior to eating (Matt. 15:1-2). Our Lord responds to their criticism reminding them what Isaiah had said, ***“You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”” (Matthew 15:7-9, ESV)***

These brash, critics of Jesus have no problem denigrating Him or His disciples. But Jesus accurately describes them as, ***“hypocrites.”*** Say one thing do another, honor Him with their lips but not their hearts. Their worship is built on their vanity and their religious teaching on human wisdom. Such as these are to be condemned for, they are not true disciples of Christ.

Now, needing a break from His hectic schedule of teaching, healing, and defending Himself from the harassment of the Pharisees, St. Matthew tells us, ***“Jesus went away from there.”*** He leaves the Capernaum and Gennesaret area and withdraws to Phoenicia to the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. This is pagan country. Their gods were Baal, Astarte, and Melqart to whom they offered sacrifice. It is in this country that Jesus is approached by a Canaanite woman seeking help for her daughter.

It's amazing, from the lips of someone whom the Jews considered unclean ushers forth a desperate plea brought forth out of the purity of a humble faith. This Canaanite woman has a daughter who is demon-possessed; thus, she dares approach Jesus for help. But remarkably, she doesn't approach Him because of His reputation as a healer. No, she approaches Him because she believes that He is the Lord, that He is Israel's Messiah. She addresses Him as Lord and Son of David. Thus, we see in this pagan, Canaanite woman, not only love for her daughter, but we see humility, faith, and patience. We see in her what we ought to see in ourselves, our need for humility, faith, patience, and the need to pray. Moreover, we also see in Christ the *Gifts God* pours out on us *Through Prayer*.

This woman's love for her daughter has no limit. She considers her daughter's affliction her own, as she cries out to Jesus, ***“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.” (Matthew 15:22, ESV)*** She knows He alone is able to help; therefore, she specifically seeks out Jesus.

Is this not how we should plea when we are deeply affected by some physical disorder or illness of one of our children or a loved one? Praying that our heavenly Father would lead us to a physician who can diagnose the problem correctly and apply the proper remedy. But sadly,

although we know the power of Jesus to heal, rare are the times when He is addressed in fervent prayer. For example, when one of our relatives is possessed by Satan, and knowing that only Jesus can help, we fail to seek Him in prayer and rather than pray we profess pity for our relative, or worse, we apply the Law. Sadly, we find no disposition to intercede for them at the throne of grace because we have so little regard for their eternal life. But this pagan, this Canaanite woman, whose love for her daughter brings her to the throne of grace, brings shame upon those who fail to do the same for their family members.

Look at her demeanor, nothing could express more humility. She approaches our Lord and addresses Him with the most profound respect, she prostrates herself before Him in deepest reverence. Like the centurion at Capernaum, she knows she is not worthy to have Jesus come under the roof of her house (Matt. 8:8). When Jesus responds to her plea saying, ***“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”*** she did not waver, but said, ***“Lord, help me.”*** And when Jesus said, ***“It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”*** (***Matthew 15:24–26, ESV***) she, with unfeigned humility refused to be discouraged, and responded by saying, ***“Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”*** (***Matthew 15:27, ESV***) Lord, You know that if you answer my prayer, it will not take from the Jews the mercy and grace You have promised them. Yes, I may be unworthy and thought of as a dog, but in Your compassion for the Jews, please pour a little on me.

Wow! What humility! Is this not how we should conduct ourselves when we come before the Lord, as we do today? Here we are before the throne of grace, our Lord Jesus making His presence among us. Should we not prostrate ourselves humbly before Him with the greatest of reverence, acknowledging our unworthiness to be in His presence and our deepest need of His forgiveness? Yes, like the Canaanite woman, we should.

Look at her faith, this is the root of her appearance. Led by the Holy Spirit this Canaanite woman is brought to Jesus, just as He brings us to Jesus through the hearing of the Gospel. She firmly believed Jesus was able to help her and her daughter. She firmly believed He and He alone could effect a cure, a cure that was beyond human ability. Not only did she believe that Jesus could heal her daughter, but He could do it from where He was, separated as He was from her daughter. She trusted not only in His healing power, but in His compassion for all men. Having made her plea Jesus recognizes her faith and commends her, saying. ***“O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”*** ***And her daughter was healed instantly”*** (v. 28)

Let us also look at her patience. When she first sought out Jesus, He paid no attention to her. Yet she continued to follow Him and His disciples, continuing to plead for help. Her urgent request increased in intensity and passion, even to the point that the disciples begged Jesus to get rid of her. Unknowingly, by doing so, they became her advocates. She was repulsed and reproached, even to the point of being insulted, but she never wavered. In patience, she waited on the Lord. She did not become irritated or angry, she did not give up. She remained steadfast in faith and prayer.

Now we’re not told how long this went on, but her persistent patience was finally rewarded when Jesus turned to her and spoke, eventually answering her prayer.

This is the perfect example for us. When our prayers are not answered as quickly as we would like, we should not give up our prayer. Yes, God may delay in answering our petition, but we should be like Jacob, who said to the Lord, ***“I will not let you go unless you bless me.”*** (***Genesis 32:26, ESV***) Furthermore, just because our prayer isn’t being answered as quickly as we would like, we should not be induced to think disparagingly of the Lord. We should not murmur, or get angry, or consider Him an unworthy God. No! To do this, places us in the position of thinking

God is not worthy of our love, our affection, or our trust. Rather than place ourselves in this dangerous position, first let us remember we deserve nothing from God but His wrath, and it was He alone who saved us from His wrath by sending His beloved Son, Jesus Christ to cure our afflictions, and forgive our sins. To answer our prayer for salvation.

The Canaanite woman is the perfect example of how we should come to the Lord, the One true Helper in the hour of our need. As the psalmist tells us, ***“In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help.”*** We, too, call upon the Lord in our time of need and with the blessing of faith, we know along with the Psalmist, that, ***“From his temple he [will hear] my voice, and my cry to him [will reach] his ears.” (Psalm 18:6, ESV)*** Moreover, to ensure that He hears our plea for help, let us follow Isaiah’s advice, ***“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.” (Isaiah 55:6, ESV)*** Like the Canaanite woman, we come to Him where He is, in His house of prayer.

Here, in His house, we reverently bow before Him, as He comes to us through Word and Sacrament ministry. In His house we pass before the Baptismal font reminded that in those blessed waters, He raised us from death to life. No longer are we to be treated as small dogs, but as His children. In His house His pastors, as called and ordained servants, hear your confession and proclaim God’s forgiveness upon you. As we worship, we are surrounded by the lost sheep of Israel and His heavenly hosts, angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven. From the Invocation to the Benediction as He hears our petitions. Reverently we sing hymns of praise and psalms, praying Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy. Throughout Divine Service He focuses our eyes upon the Altar where His beloved Son, the Word become flesh, makes His presence among us, giving us His body and blood in, under, and with the bread and wine of holy Communion, that we may be in table fellowship with Him, receiving His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. Furthermore, we are blessed to hear His Word of the Gospel, that Word by which the Holy Spirit opens our ears that we may hear and enters our hearts to pave the way that we may receive the gift of faith and thereby believe in the promises of the Gospel, that Gospel which brings us the healing and saving power of Christ whose death upon the Altar of the cross saved us from sin, death, and the devil paving the way to eternal life in heaven. Thus, we come on this first day of the week and every first day of the week to seek the Lord where He may be found, to bring Him our petitions, trusting that He will answer our pleas.

Without question, great was the faith of the Canaanite woman. She knew who Jesus was, the Lord, the Son of David, and she knew that Israel’s Messiah had come to comfort and save people just like her. Her faith was a gift from God that led her to prayer. Knowing that our Lord answered her prayer, may you also be led to prayer and be *Gifted by God Through Your Prayer*. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.