

A Woman, her Daughter, and Dogs

Mt. 12:21-28

Aug. 3, 2022

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This Gospel is about a woman, her daughter, and dogs. It is about tenacity, guts, trust, courage and above all, love...where there is love, there is life. It is also about being disregarded, heckled, and harassed. Jesus and his disciples headed east, to the districts of Tyre and Sidon. In no time at all, a Canaanite woman came down from the hills and pled with Jesus, "Master, Son of God, my daughter is cruelly afflicted by an evil spirit." Then His disciples complained to Him that the woman was bothering and heckling and harassing them. They asked him to send her away.

She persisted, came back, dropped down on her knees, and pled again. "Master please help me." She was told to stand in line and take her turn. Then he said an unexpected, startling thing; "It is not right to take bread out of children's mouths and throw it to dogs, the children get fed first. If there is any left over the dogs get it." The woman responded quickly: "Of course, Master, but beggar dogs do get scraps from the master's table - the scraps dropped by the children." Jesus gave in, "Woman, your faith is strong. Your request is answered – your daughter is no longer disturbed. The demonic affliction is gone. The woman went home, she found her daughter relaxed on the bed, the torment gone for good.

This gospel teaches us also about compassion and a mother's love for her child.

(I am going to pause for a moment for us to remember how we experienced a mother's love I remember my Mom bandaging many a cut/wound. I remember a special surprise birthday party when I turned 16. I remember the tears she wiped tears from my eyes when someone hurt me.) **Back to the Canaanite woman:** She simply *will not take no* for an answer...even when Jesus ignores her. He even insults her with a common Jewish slur for pagan as "dog." His resistance becomes astonishment. Where there is faith, there are miracles.

I recently came upon a reflection from a 12-Step reflection. I think it goes to the woman's experience...AND to us:

God is a better manager than we could hope to be. If things are not shaping up the way we like, let us wait with curiosity to see better things are in store for us. Let us look for lights in the darkness and follow them to the bright day that will always follow. We will remember our lessons of misfortune with gratitude.

WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM DELAY TODAY?

You may also wish to ponder if there is someone in your life who is crying out to you for help, and you simply do not realize it.

Before closing, I want to say a few words about the first reading. It interweaves with the Gospel. In Jewish history, In the Jewish-Babylonian War, the Babylonians captured Judah, destroyed the Temple, and led the people off to Babylon. Their captivity ended in 597 BCE (Before the Common Era) with Cyrus the Great who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. (In 1988 Palestine was granted independence from Israel.) Jeremiah provides us with a glimpse of the new contract God intended to make with the people. The new contract would be the means of restoration and rebuilding for God's people. In the New Covenant God's people will again, be happy and dance merrily with tambourines. They will plant their own vineyards upon the mountains of Samaria and eat from their own garden. The caretakers on the hills of Ephraim will call out for God's people to arise and go to Zion to meet God.

The thread with these readings is that in the Gospel, the Canaanite woman never stopped pleading with God to restore her beloved daughter's health. In this passage from Jeremiah God's people, having gone through the trauma of the Babylonian Captivity were once again given new life. In both readings God delights in finding new ways to restore and deepen God's personal relationship with his people.

What about us?

Have you pleaded with God to be healed? Have you experienced the tender, unconditional love of God's embrace?