

HUMBLE HEARTS HOUSE GREAT FAITH

Faith in God's gracious response to our prayers -- Faith that trusts God's wise response to our prayers.

Matthew 15:21-28

TEXT: *Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

As today's Old Testament Lesson reveals, Moses had made a bold request of the Lord: *Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."* Ex 33 When Jesus was on earth he actually taught his disciples to be bold and persistent in praying the Heavenly Father. But Moses boldly asked for something that would have killed him had God not adjusted His answer: *I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. ... But, ... you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."* Then the Lord placed Moses in a cave-like formation, displayed His glorious presence, and then allowed Moses to see what was left of the glory of God when it was gone.

What an amazing relationship it was between God and Moses! Scripture says: *No prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt--to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.* De 34 And yet, another time Scripture says: *Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.* Nu 12 Two things are said here about Moses. One speaks of his boldness in prayer and the other is of his humble faith in the grace and wisdom of God.

Others have this same faith. One who was far less famous than Moses is before us in today's Gospel Lesson. She is not even named. She is only known as: *a Canaanite woman* ... and a woman of whom Jesus said: *O woman, your faith is great...* Both Moses and this unnamed woman reveal this truth: HUMBLE HEARTS HOUSE GREAT FAITH. Faith in God's gracious response to our prayers; Faith that trusts God's wise response to our prayers.

Here was a godly woman who suffered insults from God Himself! PUBLIC insults! She comes confessing the Scriptural truth that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah, the Christ and Savior of the World. Here is a woman who is a true believer according to her public confession: *Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David...* and because Jesus ignores her, she is judged to be a nuisance, a public embarrassment to their congregation. Jesus ignores her worship and her painful prayer for help. His disciples see this and even instruct Jesus to send her away! And then, on top of all of that, Jesus adds insult to injury by turning to her and saying something that would surely be considered against all mission outreach rules: *He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel... It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."* She was NOT one of them. She was A DOG!

Ignored was her worship and her prayer. Despised was her presence and cruel was the response of her Savior. How could anyone, how WOULD anyone with an ounce of personal dignity, put up with such a public insult! ANSWER: Only those who know and believe that Jesus is the Eternal Son of God and Savior of the world would stand there and take that, pleading only that they might receive a crumb of mercy! She was, like we ought to be, HAPPY TO EAT THE CRUMBS that are the promises of God that He has given us and always fulfills.

Can you imagine this happening to you? But, *Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great...*

In front of everyone! In front of people who considered you spiritual riff-raff. A nobody in the church! ...***your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.***” ***And her daughter was healed at once...*** What did it matter to her what people had previously thought? What did it matter that she had suffered insults from God. What did it matter to her that God would declare to those who had just despised her: ***your faith is great!*** Her prayer was answered! Her daughter was cured!

Humble faith is this: that one knows and trusts the Lord’s great love and mercy for no other reason than that He has redeemed us with the blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus. Sincere humility does not look at who I am or what I should deserve, or what I feel I have a right to have. Sincere humility admits what God’s Law says about me, that I have fallen short of God’s glory and deserve nothing but suffering, pain and death both now and for eternity. Sincere humility places any and all hope in the grace and mercy of God who has revealed His sincerity in Jesus’ blood and righteousness that redeemed me and all sinners.

Moses believed this. This Canaanite woman believed it as her confession declared: ***Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!*** And this is the humble faith of anyone who comes boldly and confidently to the Lord in prayer! HUMBLE HEARTS HOUSE GREAT FAITH. Such humble hearts trust God’s wise response to our prayers.

God was wise in his answer to Moses’ request to see His full glory. God didn’t deny his request, but just altered its fulfillment: ***I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. ... But, ... you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.***” God didn’t want to kill this humble sinner with His glory. That will be seen by all of God’s children when we get to heaven. But the Lord gave him something he hadn’t requested: ***I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence.*** For the sake of time, let me explain this to you in simple terms. This meant that the Lord would preach the Gospel to Moses. Yes. It is the greater blessing for Moses simply to hear the Gospel message in the meaning of God’s name, “The Lord.”

Again, for the sake of time, “The Lord” was the Gospel word for “Savior God.” And it is the name that this Canaanite woman used in her prayer for Jesus’ mercy: ***Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.*** Here is a Canaanite, a non-Jew, who knew Jesus to be her Savior. Humbled by the Lord’s treatment of her did not change faith in him even if Jesus would choose not to help her. Yet Jesus did answer her with a test of her faith. ***He answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*** You see, Jesus knows the heart and faith of his own. He knows how far he can “push the envelope” of faith. And Jesus suddenly sets before the Church and the entire world an example of a humble heart that houses great faith: ***He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” But she said, “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus said to her, “O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at once.*** Suddenly, this humble and faithful servant of the Lord is elevated to such a high position as an example of GREAT FAITH! Here was a woman who never questioned Jesus’ wisdom in how he treated her, but persisted in pleading his grace and mercy.

As Christians we all live and bear our individual crosses. In His infinite wisdom our Lord knows what we can bear. These crosses often come and go in our lives. Some are very heavy and some are relatively light. Compare the cross this woman was asked to bear to that of Moses. Whose was heavier? Today, we might say that the cross of this Canaanite woman was heavier than that of Moses who only asked to see God’s glory. But then, Jesus healed her daughter and Moses had to go back down the mountain to lead a stubborn and naughty congregation of Israelites. Nevertheless, they both were humble believers in God’s grace and mercy and were not afraid to pray, not afraid to trust God’s wisdom, and were rewarded with a most wise and gracious answer from our God.

No matter if you are a Moses or a believer like this Canaanite woman, God’s gracious wisdom knows how to answer our prayers. Let us boldly persist in our prayers, for He will, sooner or later, respond with the declaration: “Great is your faith!” and then “Here is the help you requested.” Amen.