

## Sermon on Matthew 15:21-28

September 2, 2017  
St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Pastor Scharf

*“Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 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.” 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.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.”*

### **Jesus is for you and for others through you.**

Are you excited that the school year is here? Students say, “sort of.” Parents with upper class students are sad – their babies are growing up. Parents with little kids are like, “Hallelujah! Summer felt like 10 months long.” But by March, April and May, the tune will change again, and we’ll be ready for Spring and Summer. While some things we would like to stay the same, we often need change. Jesus was looking for a change for him and his disciples. A Canaanite woman needed a change for her daughter. Today we witness them meet. Jesus brings needed change for you too and change for others through you.

Jesus was in the final year of his earthly ministry. Everything was progressing toward God’s intended goal for his Son – a cross then a crown. Jesus was rejected by his own people in Nazareth. John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin, was beheaded for preaching the truth to a man and woman who didn’t want to hear that what they were doing was sinful, disgusting in God’s sight, and needed repentance. Jesus’ cousin was dead. Jesus tried to take some time away, even went by boat, but 5000 men plus women and children found where he was going. Jesus taught them all day, even fed them miraculously that evening before finally sending them away. Jesus needed to “*get away*” or “*withdraw*.” He even sent his disciples ahead in a boat, but he stayed up late praying to his Father in heaven. Jesus went after them walking on water – showing the disciples another reason to keep their eyes and their faith on him. When he got to the other side, he was recognized and so many people came to him, people were even begging just to touch his cloak. Some touched it and were healed. And so Jesus once again looked for a change – maybe to teach his disciples, maybe to rest and pray,

maybe to get peace and quiet – he traveled all the way to the coast – to Tyre and Sidon, outside of Israel’s borders. He needed a change.

Ida (1 years old) has a cold, and as I lay in bed I could hear that little cough. I kept thinking, is that croup, whooping cough, is that a normal cough, she didn’t seem sick? I went and checked on her a couple times, feeling the warmth of her cheek, laying the back of my hand gently on her chest to feel that heart beating, making sure she was breathing alright and not raspy. You parents know that feeling well. It’s one thing for you to hurt or be sick, but it’s an entirely different level when your little one is sick. And if they are really sick and it is outside of your control, and even outside the control of doctors and tests and hospitals, you can find no rest, your heart fails, and you will do anything to get them help. You desperately seek a change. And that is where she was at, that Canaanite woman. Her daughter was demon possessed. Not epilepsy, not seizures, not Tourette’s syndrome, her daughter was demon possessed and suffering terribly. No amount of antibiotics, shock treatment or therapy could help her. She was desperate for change.

*“Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 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.” Jesus did not answer a word.”* The Greek student who studies the Gospels sees it so often they don’t even think about it after awhile. *“Having answered Jesus said,” “Jesus replied,” “Jesus answered,” “Jesus responded,”* but here you have to reread the words, *“Jesus did not answer.”* What?

That didn’t stop her though - *“So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” “She kept crying out”* after Jesus. What a scene. Were the disciples advocating for her? Were they worried about another crowd coming upon them and permitting them no respite....again? And then a word to answer them.

*“He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”* Is this the point where we should accuse Jesus of segregationist tendencies? Was Jesus a racist, a bigot, or at best showing micro-aggression to a Canaanite woman (or as Mark tells us a Greek woman born in Syrian Phoenicia – You know what they say about Greeks who were born in Syrian Phoenicia...(what!?!))? That would be a popular interpretation to trend in today’s day and age – “#not my Savior” might be our new slogan if we accepted that. But we sit here a melting pot of cultures and nations within each of us if we go back far enough – a bunch of mixed breed “mutts” trying to make sense of Jesus’ words. Was Jesus being mean? No. Was Jesus playing games? Jesus doesn’t play games with us. Was Jesus testing her? Focus on this - Jesus knew his purpose and his Father’s goal. His cousin led the way in preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus came preaching

that the kingdom of heaven was near. He knew where his road would lead – right back down to Jerusalem – not to Greece, Rome, China, Germany, Africa or America. All people from all those lands from all time would be covered by his work, Jesus knew that. He told a member of the Sanhedrin, *“For God so loved the.....world.....that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). This woman too would be included in God’s plan.

*The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.* Unavoidable now as he had taken a moment to acknowledge his disciples’ question and break his silence to give his reason for silence, she takes the opportunity to come from behind the group and fall before Jesus and confront him with her dire request. She had called him *“Lord, Son of David”* – his kingly and Messianic title, and prayed for *“mercy”* only God could give in a situation that only he could help. She knew he heard her for she had been shouting it out as she followed behind them. Now she simply falls before him and says, *“Lord, help me.”*

*He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”* Jesus calls her a “tiny or little dog” in his metaphor. Offensive? I spent too much time taking offense at Jesus words and then trying to figure out from the text why they are actually not offensive. But you know what, this woman did not seem offended in the least. Why? The greatest offense to her was that she was helpless to stop a demon and the effects of sin on her daughter. She could do nothing to save her daughter or herself. Now look at us. By trying to take offense at everything and anything our fickle emotions don’t like we miss what we should truly be offended about – our own sinfulness that makes us worthy of damnation. We diagnose all the little problems others should fix in their lives or maybe we should fix while ignoring the glaring truth of our own hearts. We are sinful. Each day we fail. Each day we buy some lie the world peddles to us and look for hope and happiness where we’ll eventually only find pain and emptiness or the next worse thing. Human love, lust, a chemical rush, drugs, worldly success, savings, whatever fits your fancy will never fulfill, will never complete you, will never fix you. Realize this otherwise you’ll ruin the good things God has given in your lives by trying to manipulate them into something they are not meant to be. You’ll misuse God’s gifts so they hurt instead of help, and in doing so you’ll ruin yourselves and others. We’ve looked to so many little saviors in our life to save us in different ways, even blessings or people God has put in our lives, but they never will, nor can they. This woman had no other saviors. No doctor, no family member, not even she could help. She fell before

the only one, the only one, who could help her and she simply said, *“Lord, help me.”*

Do you feel like God plays games with you? Does God offend you with his silence or what he says to you in his Word? Does God test you? Learn from this woman to trust in Jesus no matter how it seems or how you feel. Trust the sure promises of God in his Word and hold him to them. Jesus acted like he didn't hear her, but she knew Jesus. Jesus spoke to his disciples of his strict plan which didn't seem to include her, but she knew Jesus. Jesus called her “tiny dog” but she knew Jesus. You know him too.

He's Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He travelled that road to Jerusalem. He suffered so terribly and for so long and in a way I will never feel, God crushed him - all for my sin, my sinfulness, my doubts, my misplaced trust, my idols and sinful saviors. He did that so that I can be more than a tiny dog in the master's house. He did all so that I am a child in a chair at the feast. He did all so that I, right now, as we sit in God's house, am recipient of the fine foods of forgiveness that the Lord continues to place before me. I have his Word which though offensive to my sinful nature, kills my sinful nature and fills me up with his grace and mercy. I have baptism with which God himself washed me clean of my sins and first officially called me his child. I have the Lord's Supper where my Savior brings me his own body and blood in simple bread and wine so that I do not doubt, but believe, I am forgiven. God loves even me.

This all is yours too because You Know **Jesus is For You**. As we feast at the master's table upon the forgiveness, guidance and love of God through his Word and Sacraments we get the opportunity to gladly return our thanks and praise to him in our time, offerings, voice, song and prayer. As you sit at the master's table and receive his gifts, let the crumbs fall down to those who are not yet seated at the table. Take your vegetables and the fat of your meat and give it to others that they might be offended and nourished by the message of Jesus; that they too might follow behind him and fall before him to look to him and fall on his promises alone that they too might know Jesus and be welcomed to a chair at his feast.

Two people meet who are desperately in need of change, and Jesus is what is needed for the Canaanite woman, for you, and for all. **Jesus is for you and for others through you.** *“Then Jesus said to her, O woman, great is your faith. Your request is granted. And her daughter was healed at that moment.”* Amen.