

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

When the Lord sent out the Twelve, He gave them specific instructions: Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, `The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'”

Mark’s Gospel recounts that the Canaanite woman came over the border of Galilee as Jesus traveled towards Tyre and Sidon. Mark places the account in a house, where the Lord likely had just eaten. It was there that the woman threw herself at the feet of the Christ.

Had Joshua and the Israelites done their God appointed work, the woman of Canaan, a Syrophenecian, would not have been there. She was a descendant of the pagan inhabitants of the land God gave to Israel. They were to rid the land of all the idolaters and pagans, to prevent them from drawing Israel astray. But in lust, Israel did not do as God commanded.

So a millennium and a half later, the Syrophenecian woman draws nigh unto the True Israel. She did so not fearing the death or extermination once commanded through Joshua, but rather seeking from the Lord healing and life. She approached the Lord in faith, faith worked by reports of Who He Is and the miracles that He had done. She believed Him to be the Promised Savior, a confession rejected by the Jews for whom He came. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not.

The original sin was that of pride. The devil proudly desired to usurp the heavenly throne. He enticed the first woman and man to proudly desire to “be like God.” And the sin of pride has only multiplied among fallen men.

And each of us, if we’re honest, must confess that we have fallen prey to the devil’s temptations of pride. The desire for recognition, the insistence that others hold us in high regard, demand for respect, a high self-opinion, arrogance, vanity, these are the external symptoms of the fatal internal disease of pride.

“Behold the proud”, the Prophet Habakkuk writes, “his soul is not upright within him.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit”, says the Lord. “Blessed are the meek.” Consider then, to which of these you have aspired. Have you aspired to have the biggest house, the most opulent jewelry, the finest clothes, the fattest checkbook, and the jealousy of others?

Or have you set your heart on humility, reverence, meekness and charity? Have your role models been the rich and famous and powerful, athletes and politicians and movie stars, or the humble tax collector that beat his breast and prayed “God be merciful to me, a sinner”?

Consider, then, the Canaanite woman, for in her is a model for faith. She does not approach the Lord with head held high to make demands. She begs. And when He does not answer, she humbles herself in faithful, reverent persistence. The disciples urge the Lord to send her away. She does not argue. She falls at His feet, a posture of vulnerability, a position of submission and servitude.

And even when He refers to her as a dog, she does not give up and walk away. That’s what pride would do. But faith is humble. Faith receives the chastening of God in thanksgiving.

Faith responds with the Canaanite woman “Yes, Lord...” The fallen world rejects such humility. Sinners demand worldly respect. But the Kingdom of God isn’t like the kingdoms of this world. In humility, in faith, she agrees with His rebuke. Faith eclipses pride. Faith always agrees with the Word of God. She agrees because she knows that God is love. His crumbs are enough for faith.

She believes that whatever the Lord says will be best for her salvation. That’s what faith believes, even when the Lord’s command is to repent. Faith repents. Faith falls at the feet of the Savior in whom it trusts. She believes Him to be the Promised Savior. And believing that, the healing, the life, and the eternal riches of heaven are hers. Believing, she is a true Israelite.

The Lord praises her faith. His silence, and then His response, have plumbed the depths of her faith, and brought forth from her a confession that publicly demonstrates what she holds in her heart – saving faith, faith that the will of God is always best. Faith confesses, as you have confessed, on your knees, this day – that we are not worthy. But faith makes that confession to the very one who died to reconcile you to God. Faith trusts that what He gives is good. Faith trusts that what He gives is enough. Faith is content with Christ.

And so you approached the Lord this day, humble, kneeling, beating your breast and confessing your unworthiness, because that’s what faith does. That’s not self-deprecation, that’s honesty, the honesty of faith. And your faith receives its reward. Like the Canaanite woman, you receive the very answer from God that you believed would be yours – “I forgive you all your sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The Lord praised the humble faith of the woman. And He said “Let it be to you as you desire.” Those Words are faith’s joy. The desires of faith are for the Gifts of Christ. And this day what faith desires is lavished upon you. He gives you not crumbs that fall from His Table, although that would be enough. But He invites you to take place at His Table. He gives you the place of honor before His altar. He makes you sons of God by faith in Him, and He banquets you on the royal, heavenly Meal of His Body and Blood.

He bestows upon you, the baptized, the beloved of the Lord, the redeemed of Christ, heavenly treasure, as He makes Himself your Food. Your faith eats Christ. And like the woman’s daughter, you are healed. For where Christ is, there is healing and life. Where Christ is, there is holiness. Where Christ is, there is salvation for you.

Moses asked God “If I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight.” What Moses desired, God has freely bestowed upon you. You have found grace in His sight. By faith you know Him. And He has shown you the Way, for Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He has shown you the Way of Salvation, that you walk in His Way this Lententide. And God’s promise to Moses is His Promise to you: “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

So come, kneel and receive Christ. For by His Spirit He has given you baptismal faith. And great is that faith, your faith, faith that clings to Christ. So let it be to you as you desire.

St. Matthew 15:21-28  
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