

August 20, 2017  
Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost  
Matthew 15:21-28

We are people of faith. We're all here today, believing Jesus is the Savior of the world, died and risen for the forgiveness of our sins. We're all here believing we're receiving His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation in His Word, in His body and blood in the Holy Supper, every day in our Holy Baptism in His name. We are people of faith.

But all faiths aren't the same. That's made pretty clear if you're reading through this middle section of Matthew's Gospel. Just a little bit prior from last week's reading about Jesus walking on water He said to the sinking Peter, "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" But here He says to this non-Jew Canaanite woman, "*O woman, great is your faith!*" Obviously, there's some difference here, and as people of faith who desire a right faith, this bears some examination. So let's walk through this and look at some of the differences.

First, there is the problem of recognition. If you remember, when Jesus came walking on the water and scared the disciples in the boat, He identified Himself. "*Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid.*" Yet Peter responds with, "*If it is you...*" and even though I think Peter knew it was Jesus, I don't think any of the disciples are even close to grasping who Jesus is.

This Canaanite woman however addresses Jesus "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.*" Combining "Lord" and "Son of David" seems to indicate she knows Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews; the long-promised seed of David who is to fulfill Yahweh's promises. Though I won't speculate as to how much she understands, it is pretty clear she recognizes Jesus is of God.

Then there is the problem of self. While I give kudos to Peter for having faith enough to get out of the boat, in doing so he is kind of focused on Peter. Peter wants to be doing the cool, miraculous walk on water thing. I'm not sure why he thinks he has the right but maybe some of

it's because he's a good Jew, or a man, or a disciple. I don't know, but it somewhat seems that Peter is interested in getting in on some of the glory. Peter's got faith, but I've got to wonder if some of that faith isn't in himself.

This Canaanite woman—not at all. This woman is lowly, needy and begging with the utmost humility. She even goes so far as to agree with Jesus when He refers to her as a dog! She knows she's got nothing. She's a Gentile, a woman, a stranger. Having nothing of herself to boast, her faith is all aimed at Jesus. Moreover, she's not seeking glory or anything else for herself; she's seeking her daughter be saved from the forces of evil.

And of course, Peter sees the wind and the waves and he doubts. Jesus is right there on the water in front of Him, having summoned Peter to come just like Peter asked him to. Jesus is looking right at him, obviously focused and caring for him, and Peter still doubts. His faith is weak.

This woman—Jesus is totally ignoring her! He will not answer her. I'm betting He is not even making eye contact. Even when the disciples take up her cause He says He is not for her; *“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* It seems that not just the world and not just the forces of evil are against her. It seems the Messiah of God is against her! Yet she cries out. She will not be deterred by how bad things look. She knows this Messiah Jesus is where her help is to be found. She knows she is at the feet of the one in whom salvation is found and she will not be moved.

And finally, and maybe most importantly, Peter and the disciples were constantly seeking great things and places of glory in Jesus' coming kingdom. They argued over which of them was the greatest. They expected grand things in and of the world from Jesus.

This woman, accepting the status of Gentile dog before Jesus, was content to settle for the crumbs of what Jesus had to give, for she trusted the crumbs of the gifts of God would be enough. Jesus praises this faith...and heals her daughter.

All of this is helpful for us as we strive to practice our gift of faith rightly and well.

We need to recognize where our faith is to be located—the person and work of Jesus Christ! The psalm saith, “*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.*” A great faith does this. A not-so-great faith struggles with trusting in one’s self or the powers of the world as the greatest good in one’s life. Make it a point to be asking yourself where your faith is aimed, and repent accordingly, recognizing Jesus as your only Savior.

Speaking of self, one again, get over yourself. Are you finding glory in yourself? Are you seeking to gain glory for yourself? There is a fine line between ambition to do things well to God’s glory as His child and seeking your own glory apart from God. A great faith knows one is nothing compared to or apart from God and seeks simply to be His child seeking His purposes.

And, difficult as it may sometimes be, remember that Jesus is Lord despite how bad your world may look sometimes. Sometimes life is great. But sometimes it can seem God is ignoring you, turning His back on you, walking right past you as the world’s evil and brokenness crashes down on top of you. Jesus is still the Lord, Son of David. He is where your help is found. He is the Savior. He, and only He, sees you through this veil of tears to the glorious mountain of God where tears and sorrow are no more. Faith is not having the world being great for you. Faith is trusting God has already gained you the kingdom beyond it in Christ Jesus.

And finally, know that the crumbs are enough.

What is grand and great and glorious in the world's eyes is not here. The feast of earthly delights is not here. Here, in God's house, we have what are crumbs in the eyes of the world: a little water splashed on a baby's head; a morsel of bread and some rather cheap wine, an old book from which we speak truths at which the world scoffs; crumbs.

But these are the crumbs given us by the God of all creation! These are the crumbs which connect us to the risen Savior reigning forever with all the powers of earth, heaven and hell firmly beneath His feet! These are the crumbs the Almighty God has ordained nail our sins and every faltering of our faith to the cross of Jesus and join us to Him is His glorious resurrection! These crumbs are more than enough to get us through life and to new life forever.

Ironically, while everything I've said here about seeking a great faith is right and biblical—this thing that Jesus praises as great faith; to this woman it wasn't faith at all. She wasn't thinking about her faith. She says, "*Lord, help me.*" She was focused on her need, knowing that need is filled only in Christ Jesus.

Want a great faith? Know the same thing. Your need of forgiveness and salvation is great. Your need is filled only in Christ. His blood-bought crumbs are enough.

Amen.