**Arguing With The Judge**

Based on [Matthew 15:21-28](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt15.21-28)

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Reminiscere

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In today’s gospel, Jesus assumes his role as “judge” most clearly. And I think that’s why it is somewhat jarring to us. We hear and confess often enough that Jesus “will come to judge the living and the dead,” but here we see it. By that I mean, someone comes to him for mercy, and he doesn’t oblige her, doesn’t affirm her. He seems more concerned with justice than mercy. Though she is desperate, weak, respectful and in great need, and not for selfish reasons, but for the salvation of her daughter…Jesus doesn’t rush to show compassion. Instead he ***tests the legal merits of her claim, and waits for her to explain why it is she should receive the remedy requested.***

The Cannanite woman in today’s text would make a brilliant lawyer or debater. What I mean is that she is unbelievably skilled at respecting the law, reducing the discussion to the main point and sticking to it. She does not get distracted or deterred by emotions, anxiety, experiences or appearances of how the situation seems to be going. She simply takes Jesus at his words and respects the law. And though his words seem harsh—(and I think they are harsh)--Jesus is pushing her, in a way she needs to be pushed, ***in order to bring out her faith to her lips.*** Faith is not only being desperate enough to ask for mercy; it is also being humble enough to respect the law and it’s judge. And though she persists in arguing with the judge, he does not get annoyed with her persistence, nor consider her quarrelsome. In the spirit of the Old Testament text, we can say that she verbally “wrestles with God”—argues with him--and prevails, and is even blessed for it.

The Cannanite woman has a daughter who is demon possessed. Somehow she knows Jesus to be the messiah, who came to bind up the strong man, cast out satan and his angels, and establish the rule of God. When Jesus is passing through her town, she approaches him and says “**Have mercy on me O Lord, Son of David.**” Son of David means messiah…Christ.

She asks Christ for help, and though he has been showing himself as the Christ, he doesn’t jump at the opportunity. And this is what is jarring. Earlier in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus said to his disciples, “**Come to me *all* who labor and are heavy laden and *I will* give you rest**”. He teaches in the Gospel of John “***All* that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me *I will never* cast out**.” Maybe the Cannanite woman had heard report of these or similar words of Jesus,--maybe not--but the fact remains that she resolved to come to him with her labors, her anxieties. And he doesn’t simply or immediately “give her rest” as it were. In fact it seems…it appears…that he does cast her away.

It is an important detail that Jesus never does tell her “Go away”, even when his disciples beg him to. It only appears that way to one who is weak and easily discouraged. **But Jesus dodges her desperate plea three times.** First, he ignores her until his disciples plead with him to send her away. You get the sense that it was both awkward and painful to see her misery and their Lord ignore it. They beg him to send her away. He then said,

She continues to come, literally gets on her knees and begs for help. And still he doesn’t oblige, but only says “**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel…It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs**.” In other words, “*God sent me to do miracles and wonders for his people, the house of Israel; it is not right to give those miracles to lower life forms such as Gentiles, such as you are.*” I don’t know how much hay we can make over Jesus essentially calling her a dog. Maybe he doesn’t mean to call her a lesser life form, like it sounds to us…but it is certainly NOT a term of endearment. At the very least, he said I did not come to minister to people like you.

The Caananite woman doesn’t get offended or distracted by appearances or experiences. She simply takes Jesus at his word. “Ok, you’re right…of course your right…your miracles and ministry here wasn’t meant for my kind of people…but even the dogs eat the scraps from the masters’ table.” To put it another way, yes God created the heavens and the earth for man, but in taking care of man, he also clothes the lilies of the field and causes the sun to shine on all things. God’s grace is so superabundant that the cup he fills for his people overflows. It would be unlawful for me to drink from another’s cup…but there is nothing unlawful for me to have whatever is left over.

When you go to court and stand before the Judge…you are not going to get anywhere by getting offended when He quotes to you the Law. The law is not fair or unfair…it is the Law and if you fall on the wrong side of it you are guilty and without excuse. No, you must both affirm the law while at the same time showing how it doesn’t prevent you from being granted the remedy you seek.

On the Last Day, Jesus Christ, the savior and the Judge will come on clouds of Glory with angels attending. And he will hold trial and everyone, the living and the dead will stand trial individually. And it is possible that he will test you, the way he tested the Caanite woman, in order to expose whether you have faith. He may say, “It is not right to open the gates of heaven to sinners”, and you need to be ready. Because if you say to Jesus “don’t judge, who are you to judge”, he’ll show you. If you say, “but you made me that way, so it’s really your fault”, you’re in contempt of Court. But if you say, “Yes Lord, but even sinners may repent and so avail themselves of the blood you shed on the cross for them.” And to that answer, the law is still upheld, and the remedy can still be granted. The gates of heaven will open to you, scales of sin will fall from your eyes and you will see the lamb sitting upon the throne in glory.

The purpose of the church on earth is not to make you feel good about yourself, or to affirm your selfish goals and ambitions. The purpose God gave to the church on earth is to prepare you for judgment day, so that, like the Canaanite woman, you will be humble before the law, and well equipped with the word of God to give answers in faith that will amaze even the Son of God himself. For they are his words given to you, treasure them more than the world, and your faith will make you well.