**Holding God to His Promises**

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

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Second Sunday in Lent ~ Reminiscere

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In the Name of Jesus,

In times of persistent grief or depression or family struggle or trial, the Christian will turn to prayer. And it can be baffling to we of little faith that prayer doesn’t always seem to “work”. We don’t always get what we sincerely pray for. That’s when we need to be reminded of the purpose of prayer. Prayer is not just asking God giving you what you want; rather Prayer is holding God to His Promises, and counting on his merciful character.

I once took my car to the mechanic one morning and told him about an annoying and potentially dangerous rattle that I can hear and feel vibrating through the steering wheel. He said he should have it done in a couple of hours. And so I wait, and I get a call, and the mechanic says, “*We put your car to the test, and noticed that your stabilizer links need to be replaced. We’ll have to fix that before we can even begin to diagnose the rattling problem*.” So I give him permission to do whatever they said, and then I get a call at about 5. “*We replaced the thinger, and the whatchamacallit. It improved the problem a bit, but your car still isn’t fixed. You’ll probably need a whole new steering column.*” And then on the matter of cost, he spouted out some number to me that sounded like profanity. I would have hung up on him, but he still had my car.

Really, I had no right to be offended. After all, the mechanic promised to fix my car, but he never promised that it wouldn’t cost me. I guess the only thing that still caused me concern was his character...could I trust him to work faithfully on my car?

When it comes to God, and when I approach him in prayer, before the issue of trust and faith comes a more fundamental question…what has God promised to fix, and can I trust him to work faithfully?

The book of the Psalms is a superb example for prayer. That’s why our a good part of our worship liturgy is reciting psalm verses. King David, and the other writers of the Psalms were no strangers to Grief and struggle. And they express their grief and struggle to God himself. And the Psalmists say things to God in prayer that sound presumptuous and offensive to our sensibilities. The 10th Psalm begins, “Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you **hide yourself** in times of trouble.” The 13th Psalm begins, “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? It’s almost like the Psalmist trying to provoke the God Almighty into an argument?

And then we have the 22nd Psalm Quoted by Jesus Christ himself on the Cross, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.”** Is Jesus is getting on God’s case, questioning his wisdom and authority? Can He do that? Can we do that?

The Old Testament lesson for today, I think, sheds a ton of light on the subject. Can we faithfully pick a fight with God? Yes! **Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. [But Jacob persisted] Then the man said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”**

Jacob’s opponent only appeared to be a man. Jacob wrestled with God that day, He wrestled with God. He wrestled with God and God blessed him for it. Sure, Jacob walked away with a dislocated hip, some people think Jacob limped for the rest of his life because of the wound God gave him, but that didn’t seem to matter to him. God didn’t promise him good posture. Jacob got what he wanted; he got what God had promised to give him! God had promised to give him the blessing that he gave his father Isaac and Abraham, a blessing that said I will be with you and your descendants wherever you go, and that in your offspring, your descendant Jesus Christ, all of the nations of the world shall be blessed!

And so, dear friends in Jesus, that’s when you know you’ve got God by the short hairs...so to speak. God has made each of you a promise. He didn’t promise that you will be respected or loved by the world. He didn’t promise you job security or a hefty pension. He didn’t promise you miracle healings. He didn’t promise that you won’t suffer and die like He did. But he did promise to be faithful and merciful. He did promise never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). He promised you death which will finally put your sin to death, but he also promised eternal life. He promised that your sinfulness will cause suffering to yourself and others, but he also promised a Savior. And He delivered.

In the Gospel lesson, we have the story of a Caananite woman whose daughter is oppressed by a demon. She cries out to Jesus for mercy. Jesus ignores her. His disciples beg him to send her away. She advances, undeterred, kneels down (as if in prayer) and asks for help. Jesus says his blessings aren’t meant for her. She argues back and says that still, his blessings are so abundant, she will gladly settle for the leftovers. She holds Jesus to his promised mercifulness, she asks him to be gracious, which he has promised to be. He doesn’t rebuke her, call her impetuous, or sigh at having to have a prolonged discussion. He doesn’t say “don’t you argue with me!” Completely the opposite, he does what she asks and commends her faith.

In persistence you prevail, but don’t play the hotshot. You prevail only because God doesn’t want it any other way. He promised to save you and God is held Hostage by His Word. “Let us argue together”...says the Lord. Even if we are faithless, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself. You are supposed to hold God to His Promises. That’s the way He wants it. That’s the way He designed our salvation to be. And, we can be sure and trust that God will be true to his Word.