**The Certainty of Faith**

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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Today’s scripture is about the certainty of faith. Faith is shown in confidence. In the Old Testament Lesson, Jacob famously wrestles with God for a whole night, because he was confident that God would bless him and he wasn’t going to be deterred. Likewise, the Canaanite woman had three opportunities to give up on Jesus. But she persisted in seeking his blessing because she was confident that he could bless her, and that he would bless her.

We live in a world of fear, and uncertainty and doubt. Christ came so that we may have courage, certainty and faith in him. Faith takes hold of Jesus Christ and makes him its own. Jesus said, “**Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest**.” Who else in all creation has ever said such comforting words?

Somehow, the Canaanite woman knew these words. She had heard of Jesus Christ and his Gospel drew her to him for help. She had a daughter who was demon possessed. This is more than an illness, this is a spiritual assault. Many of us have had to face sickness and death in those we love. And we know that every day we battle temptations and assaults that are strategically sent our way by the devil. But to look into the eyes of your own daughter, whose soul is trapped underneath the flesh by the assaults of an evil spirit, would bring the strongest of us to another level of desperation.

The Canaanite woman is desparate and she knows two things, (1) that Jesus can help, and (2) that he will help. She knows he can help because of how she calls him. “Have mercy on me, O Lord Son of david.” She calls out to him as Lord, and as Christ. “Son of David” means the messiah, who would come to Israel through the lineage of King David.

Certainty that Jesus can help and that he will help are marks of this woman’s faith, and they are both important. Because a faith divided on these teachings leaves doubt and fear which cannot overcome the assaults of the devil. And many false christs are born out of these problems.

The first doubts the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It prays without certainty. It asks God for things it doubts he will give. It knows that God is all powerful and has the ability to grant whatever it asks, but such a fractured faith lacks the certain knowledge that God wants to help and will send help. The help might not be in the form we ask, but God sends help. If there is a sickness he may send healing, but even if he doesn’t he gives the gospel assurance of eternal life. Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, and should heaven and earth pass away, his words will not pass away.

The second problem doubts the power of God. It prays without certainty as well. Jesus once said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle… “Who then can be saved”, “With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

We should be certain of God’s almighty power, that he can help us. We must also be certain of God’s mercy and grace, that he will help us. These two ingredients of faith are what makes such accounts in the scripture so noteworthy as this Canaanite woman. Her faith can rightly be characterized as an obsession with Jesus.

Obsession can be defined as the state of mind where a single thing is made to be everything. Faith is an obsession with Jesus Christ, the Word of God, whose works and will are in every word on every page of the bible. The Canaanite woman’s faith was apparent in the fact that nothing deterred her from Christ, not the complaints of his disciples against her, not the potentially offensive idea that Jesus was only sent to the nation of Israel and not to her kind of people. Jesus--in whom there is salvation for her daughter—Jesus was her obsession. Nothing else mattered than to get to him to receive from him what he could give her.

And the caliber of her faith is central to today’s scripture. The confidence and certainty with which she comes to Jesus undeterred is instructive. We are to learn from her faith. The church today has become obsessed with breaking down barriers to Jesus for the average person. This has led to people tearing down traditions in the church, tearing down even biblical doctrine itself if it might offend someone, or might keep them from coming to Christ. But because of faith, this Canaanite woman is not a snowflake, she’s a linebacker. Three times she could have been deterred from Christ, given up and turned away. She could have been offended by his disciples’ behavior. She could have been offended by his initial silence. She could have been offended by his saying that he came for the children of Israel not for her. But she wasn’t. It’s not that she overpowered these doubts and obstacles by her own strength. It’s simply that it didn’t matter.

In moments of desperation, the Holy Spirit clears away all other concerns and shows the simplicity of faith. Faith knows that Jesus can help, and he will help. And we may easily resonate with the words of St. Paul, “I count all things as worthless, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.”