

<sup>21</sup> *Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.* <sup>22</sup> *A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."*

<sup>23</sup> *Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."*

<sup>24</sup> *He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."*

<sup>25</sup> *The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.*

<sup>26</sup> *He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."*

<sup>27</sup> *"Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."*

<sup>28</sup> *Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.*

Insensitive. Indifferent. Discriminatory. Insulting.

We should understand how individuals might perceive Jesus' actions and words in this account.

Anti-woman. Exclusionary. Hypocritical.

An honest and in-depth look peels away such negative judgments as mere illusions – faulty perceptions of onlookers peering back across almost 20 centuries.

Do you want to understand what's really going on in this exchange? The Canaanite woman's reaction to Jesus gives us our cue.

What she doesn't do might be as beneficial for us to note, as what she does do.

#1 – The Canaanite woman *doesn't* think the worst of the Lord when he may *seem* not to be listening.

Instead, she clings in faith to what she knows & trusts about Jesus. She had come to know Jesus as the promised Son of David. That together with how she calls Jesus "Lord" expresses: "You are the fulfiller of the promises. You are full of mercy. You owe me nothing. But I ask your help, because I trust in your faithfulness and your love."

You and I might feel the need for an explanation at this point. “Why the silence, Lord?” It may be even out of a sense of wanting to defend Jesus - to have an explanation ready for anyone who would challenge Jesus’ behavior.

He obviously has a point to his silence. He could have just said a “no.” He didn’t.

The Canaanite woman didn’t cry out for an explanation for his silence. She – in faith – holds onto what she knows about the Lord. And she keeps calling out to him.

Are you making a connection yet to your life? As you dig into this exchange between our Lord & the Canaanite woman, are you seeing anything that relates to your own prayer life?

Maybe your initial reaction to Jesus’ silence in this account was a wince, because it hit a tender spot for you personally. Sometimes the Lord’s answer to our requests may feel like silence. Maybe you’ve felt some resentment: “Don’t you see, don’t you hear the urgency, Lord?” Maybe you’ve felt neglected on some level or abandoned: “Lord, where are you? Are you even listening?”

Sometimes we’re tempted to think the worst of the Lord. Other times we’ve failed to trust Him altogether, because it seemed He wasn’t listening. When we admit to such times of weakness, the only answer for us is: listening.

Listen – in faith – to the Lord’s Word to you. He replies to your plea of “Lord, Have Mercy on me a sinner” ... “I tell you: your guilt is taken away. You are forgiven. Go home in peace – washed of sin, robed in my righteous life.” So God renews in you the humble confidence of a sinner who rests in the hands of a gracious God.

As we return to the Canaanite woman, take in again her reaction – this time to what Jesus says in vs.24.

(#2 –) The Canaanite woman *doesn’t* react to the situation based on her feelings or her reason. Those outward indicators are so often misleading. When the Lord’s way may seem contrary or contradictory....

All we see her doing is LISTENING, listening intently to the Lord. Since she didn’t hear a “no” to her request, we hear her CALLING again. She is TRUSTING still in what she knows: the Lord, my Lord, is merciful.

One thing that flows through from her response here to her next response is: #3 – She *doesn’t* raise any objection to the Lord’s Word.

Here, our English translation doesn't capture the detail of her reply. Her words indicate she picked up on the depth of what Jesus said to her. We want to talk about 2 aspects of that.

First, she accepts God's divine plan as told in His Word. It's good for us to understand what Jesus was expressing with "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

That means that in God's divine plan, Jesus' three years of public ministry would be spent among the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - reaching out to the house of Israel. That doesn't mean other people were being kicked to the curb by the Son of God. It doesn't take away from the fact: Jesus came to take away the sins of the people of all nations. God still wanted everyone of every race to come to a knowledge of His saving truth. This was simply part of God's chosen plan: those in Israel sat at Jesus' feet and heard him tell how he came to save. They heard him yell his work's completion - "Paid in full!" - at its Finish. Many believed. And our Resurrected Lord told them to take the good news to all the world. The message of Jesus as Savior is - and always has been - meant for all people.

So, we find ourselves again squarely in the heart of this topic: trust. Where human reason might tug at you to conclude "that doesn't seem fair," you must say: "Reason, you've gone beyond your limits!" When emotions might lead one to feel slighted or give up in frustration, we must stand our ground: "I will not follow where my emotions are leading me right now!"

We hear God speak. His Word is clear. "Yes, Lord."

Think of all the examples where this applies. Sciences challenge what God's Word says about how the world - and we - got here. Our culture attacks the God-given blueprint for marriage, how men and women have complementary-but-different roles in a marriage (also in the life of a church family), the importance of holding to all God's teachings (and what that means in answering with whom you join for acts of worship, and the times and places you won't).

The Canaanite woman says in reply to Jesus: "Yes, Lord!" She says, "Yes, Lord, and also (or, for also)..." There is literally no "but" in her words. There is no objection raised to the truth Jesus shared.

Not only does she accept what the Lord told her, she bases her request to Jesus on His very words to her. There is a subtle nuance that again doesn't come out in our English translation. But several English translations convey it. See if you can spot it in this one:

*"It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the pet dogs." "Yes, Lord, you're right," said the woman, "[and also] those pet dogs eat the scraps of food which fall to the floor from their master's table."* [Everyday American English - Julian Anderson]

Many times the Jews would refer to the gentiles in a derogatory way by calling them dogs. Jesus, however, uses a different term. Jesus doesn't use the Greek word that meant wild, ownerless, unclean dogs that you'd find on the streets. Jesus used the term "little dogs," the kinds that would live within the house and sit and play with the children, becoming part of the family.

The Canaanite woman replies to Jesus: "Yes, Lord, I accept your Divine plan. I do not ask you to take anything away from your ministry among the Jewish people (I know you will thereby bless people of all nations through them). And I am more than satisfied to receive the crumbs that happen to fall my way. For I trust even the crumbs of your mercy will be enough for me – for my daughter."

This morning we learn about great faith. It:

- Calls humbly & confidently to the Lord.
- Trusts Him.
- Listens to Him.
- Accepts what he says.
- Goes on requesting and praying to the Lord (on the basis of his Word).

Lord, grant us such faith. Amen.

