

HUMBLE PRAYER

The healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28) has an important message for us. But first, let's review the story. Jesus has gone off with the disciples to pray. It is to be a retreat, a time of renewal before He begins His journey to Jerusalem and the Cross. It is a time to get away from the pressures of every day life. So He goes to the beach at Tyre and Sidon. This is a place OUTSIDE Israel. It is a place away from the crowds that followed Him everywhere IN Israel. It is a place of NON believers. But one Woman begins to follow. There is no crowd, just one woman. And all she does is SHOUT for help. She would not go away. So much for getting away from it all, the disciples say. She is shouting for her daughter to be healed. She is shouting TO the "Son of David," a MAN. A Miracle Worker, but a man. She is shouting with desperation to someone she can see and touch. She is DEMANDING a response. Jesus responds with SILENCE. I know about shouting at God and Jesus in my desperation. When I am sitting with the very sick and dying, I shout out to God about the unfairness (as I see it) and the pain. And I know about silence. I know God is there, just as woman could SEE Jesus. But why doesn't he SAY something? Why doesn't he DO something? All I hear is silence. Then the Canaanite woman came and knelt before Jesus, saying "Lord, Help me." She was humbler and gentler. She asked, rather than demanded. THEN Jesus replies "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." These are hard words. But our Lord was not afraid to say hard words. Indeed, He told a young man who wanted to be a disciple to "follow me and let the dead bury the dead." But the words to the Canaanite woman are particularly jarring words. How many of us, I wonder, if we heard our Lord say these words to us, would not have given up and left. Similarly, how many of us have not had our faith jarred by some particularly difficult event in our life. We must follow the example of this woman. She showed incredible humility AND FAITH in face of such a harsh response. She says "Yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." To this, the Christ, the anointed one of Israel, responds "Great is your faith" and He heals her daughter. It is interesting that the only other person Jesus told that his faith was "great" was the Centurion, the other non-Jewish healing.

Prayer is supposed to be incessant, faithful, confident, and persistent. But prayer is also supposed to be humble and patient. Prayer is NEVER to be arrogant or demanding. Prayer is always asking,

not telling. And we should always end them with as Jesus ended His prayer in the Garden the night before his crucifixion, "not my will but thine be done."

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