

**The Gospel: Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28**

*Celebrant:* The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

**People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

[Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”]

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

*Celebrant:* The Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

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**Prayer:**

*May "...My sayings will drip like the dew, as raindrops upon the grass, and showers upon new growth. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord." In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

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**Homily:**

What would it take for you to have your child healed? Think about that for a moment. If your child was dying and you knew that the one person that could keep that from happening was there: how far would you drive, walk, crawl to get there, and once there would you turn away when you were not heard if your child's life was ultimately in their hands?

No, you crawl, you would fight, you would break through the crowd of people and would interrupt as rudely as you needed to make sure that the attention was yours –and your child was healed.

In our gospel this morning, we hear of a woman who is doing just what we would have done: stopping at nothing because her daughter's life is at stake.

This woman, as Matthew records is "a Cannanite woman" but Mark records that she is "Syro-Phonician", that is from Northern Israel, but what all this Gospel writer confusion tells us is that she was really no one special. She was an outsider who memory is not clear where she came from, but clear that she broke through to Jesus.

She was a non-Jew who had to break through the Jewish environment where she did not belong and was not welcome in order to seek the truth and get healing for her daughter.

She, like any other passionate parent, is willing without hesitation to violate all social norms and protocols in order to get help and relief for her beloved daughter.

This woman is an example of crossing boundaries. Pushing through propriety. Cutting the "red tape" of convention. Yet she comes with no pride, no resentment, and no deference. Jesus is her court of last resort.

And when she gets to Jesus she begs him, "*Lord, help me.*"

But she does not get the answer we would expect from Jesus, he answered, *“It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”*

After all her pushing through and breaking boundaries, she gets a parable.

Just earlier in Matthew’s Gospel we heard of the difficulty that the disciples had understanding parables and when Peter asks on behalf of the disciples and asks Jesus, “Explain this parable to us.” And Jesus replies, “Are you also still without understanding?”

For Jesus, the most faithful of the people that he had been among were his beloved disciples, but he still could not believe their understanding of him. Their faith, their belief, he thought would enable them more clarity in what he said and who he was. But it didn’t, they were still kinda clueless when he was teaching.

It is not that they did not have faith but that their faith was not able to see his word for what it was: something to move them, something to be a part of, something to experience.

I read a lot of poetry. And have found that a lot of other people do not read a lot of poetry. And what else I have found is a lot of people do not read a lot of poetry because they are looking for a sort of moral to the story.

They are trying to determine a meaning to the parable. A lot of times I will give someone a poem and they will read it and hand it back and say, “I don’t really get it.”

When reading poetry a lot of people are just at the stage where they are simply just the definitions for the works. But words are more than simply definitions: they are sounds, music, memories, too. And sometimes the poem means nothing using the definitions of the words but sounds like music when it is said and can connect with the everyday around you –it breaks through and shows you your life is music too. Here is an example for you, and I will let you know ahead of time, there is no meaning to this poem:

**This is Just to Say, by William Carlos Williams**

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious

so sweet  
and so cold

Music in the words connecting with perhaps your own memory of a loved one mistakenly eating something they shouldn't have or you eating something you shouldn't have, and how sweet it was.

Like this poem, the woman of our Gospel, broke through the crowded everydayness of life, because she hears the music in life: her daughter, and doesn't want to be without that song.

And when Jesus answers her plea for help with a parable, she breaks the silence of many a woman who knows that life is precious and says her own poem back to him, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters"*

Then Jesus answered her, *"Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."* And her daughter was healed instantly.

The woman is not teaching Jesus a lesson, she is saying I see it too, your mission is great, the saving of these many faces in the crowd, but I also have a great mission to be here at your feet begging you too, for there is one more face I need you to heal. And I know you can do it.

Faith is not a word-puzzle to figure out or a poem you cannot determine the meaning of, faith is seeing the preciousness of life and being willing to speak up for that value we have found.

May we all have the great faith of this woman in our lives.

***Amen.***