

Our Lord tells us, commends us, shows us that our prayers matter and even brings God to act. Consider for a moment your daily prayers; the content of them; what is it that you're most typically ask God for? I would guess that probably #1 success in something, that of course brings more money to resolve your problem. And probably #2 our own health, well-being; perhaps #3 for others who are sick, dying; or wrong, foolish, need help. And then perhaps help for you in your vocations and home and perhaps even to pray for church, for country. Maybe even, God be praised, delivered from evil, demons and for forgiveness of sins.

But I suspect often missing -at least in my prayers- the simple request: that God would keep me Christian, that He would give me faith. He would keep me in this faith, prevent me from falling away, from making sinful, harmful choices; have faith that clings to God's Word above all else, to cling to God's Word amidst sorrows, brokenness and failures; finally deliver me in faith at the end. This of course is our greatest need. Our cries for forgiveness, for mercy, for grace in help of every time of need -rises from a prayer to keep me Christian, give me faith.

In the NT, Jesus praises only two people for faith. Not the apostles or even the blessed Mary. The Roman centurion who asks his servant be healed. He recognizes Jesus has authority to speak a word and it happens, performative power in His Word. So if He speaks, it is so. Jesus says his faith great, unlike anything in Israel.

And then this Canaanite women with demon possess child. It's astounding how Jesus treats her; what Jesus does for her here He strengthens her faith in trials, testing, in suffering. (I've said this before.) You wouldn't say to someone who just graduated from military boot camp "oh I'm sorry you had to suffer and endure so much, I'm sorry it was hard" No! He's knows what he's gone through will help him be a better man, better soldier, stronger, good for him. If life were easy it would not make us better Christians, would not help strengthen our faith.

The Gospel, when Scripture says **Behold**, something very extraordinary significance is taking place. She says, **Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.** She calls Jesus Yahweh (God) and then the messianic title -making a confession of who He is and even coming for gentiles. What does she ask, not something for herself like our daily prayers. She's praying for her daughter demon processed. If Jesus came for anything, He came to deliver us from demons, evil leads to death. Her prayer, it's a perfect prayer. In response, Jesus seemly ignores her. Not a word. The disciples seem embarrassed, urge him -not to help her- but

send her away. **I was only sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.** She's not of Israel, she's unclean, unworthy. Surely she must be tempted to give up. But she has faith in who He is; she will not let go. She trusts Him, the Scriptures and not her experiences or reason. She will wait for God to show His hand, to reveal Himself as the God of Abraham and the fathers, the God of grace whose mercy endures forever; who forgave David whose in Jesus lineage has ancestor Bathsheba the gentile, gentiles Rahab, Ruth, Tamar; who sent Jonah to preach to Ninevites, dirty gentile people and welcome them by repentance and faith in His Kingdom.

In response to Jesus hard, harsh treatment, she worships Him, the word **knelt** means worship, then another perfect prayer: **Lord help me.** Then it gets harsher, He refers to her as a gentile dog. She turns the word and His promises on Him **yes Lord fine I'm a dog I don't care as long as I'm in your house, as long as I'm with you. I don't want the children's bread, I want your Bread, crumbs that fall from your table so long as I eat from your hand so long as it's your bread, I'm part of your family, I am satisfied.** Jesus moved to compassion, all this to exercise her faith, teach her, teach those there, teach you! to believe in His word to not judge simply by His silence, or your reason and experiences but wait for the Lord to act, no give up, trust His goodness. He praises her faith.

This of course is exactly what we need to learn because we've had plenty of prayers where it seems as though God ignores us. We've had plenty of prayers where the answer seems to be no for whatever reason, prayers to restore a family member who has strayed, prayers for a loved one to live, prayers for temptations and struggles to cease.

The woman prays to Jesus, as we do very service, **Lord, have mercy!** For like us, she is being harassed by evil and demons. Like us, she has family members who are in eternal peril, like us, with struggles.

We too, believe you're good; we will wait on you to show your hand; we trust you; we know You died for our sins and lives and promises to work all things together for good and we're not letting go of that -no matter what. Dear Lord, keep me Christian and give me, strengthen faith.

Lent, a time for prayer, fasting, charity; reflect upon how you've lived. Lord help us to pray. We, like Jacob, the women wrestle with God, demand that God bless us, through His very promises found here. We too, insist the Lord show us mercy and heal us from the ravages of the devil and life through the sacramental crumbs that fall from the Master's table and have mercy, please. Pray for faith, to be keep Christian as you take on the day as He answers with His promises.