

Sermon for the Second Sunday in Lent 022821

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. AMEN

Humility, Mercy and Faith

Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is previously vexed with a devil... But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Earlier this week I reading from the Prophet Ezekiel chapter 34. For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “Woe to the shepherds who only take care of themselves! You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks for his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep...I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy.”

So it was that our Lord placed over Israel a shepherd - David. He said, “He will tend them and be their shepherd.” However, he was a mortal man and given a great task of caring for a nation and many of the sheep became like goats.

If they only had had the the words of Saint Paul in todays Epistle, “We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have

received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”

For generations God’s people have turned from God wanting only to please themselves showing no humility and seeking no mercy. Are we not guilty of that ourselves today?

Unlike David a mortal man God became Man in Bodily presence, His Birth, the showing of His miracles, and the power of His Resurrection, among the people: that so it had been ordained, so set forth from the beginning, so predicted, and so fulfilled; that Christ Jesus was to come to the nation of the Jews, to be seen and slain, and to gain from among them those whom He foreknew.

Saint Augustine said, *He is God, and is made Man; He lays aside His Divinity, that is, in a manner sequences, hides, that is, what was His Own, and appears only in that He had taken to Him. Being God He is made man: and man will not acknowledge himself to be man, that is, will not acknowledge himself to be mortal, will not acknowledge himself to be frail, will not acknowledge himself to be a sinner, will not acknowledge himself to be sick, that so at least as sick he may seek the physician; but what is more perilous still, he fancies himself in sound health.*

He laid low the proud, and rose up the humble.

For to the Gentiles He went and in this was fulfilled what the Prophet said;

"A people whom I have not known hath served Me." See how deep, how clear, how express the prophecy is; "a people whom I have not known," that is, to whom I have not exhibited My Presence, "hath served Me."

"By the hearing of the ear they have obeyed Me:" that is, they have believed, not by seeing, but by hearing. Therefore have the Gentiles the greater praise. "For the others saw and slew Him; the Gentiles heard and believed."

Let us step back to the Law of Moses where it is written, "Ye shall cast them to the dogs," and it was a matter of care to the Holy Spirit to give instruction about certain foods that they should be left to the dogs.

This has been shown in the case of this woman. For He only answered to her plea, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

Thou art a dog, thou art one of the Gentiles, and thou worship idols.

"It is not" therefore "meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

Had she turned away after these words, she had gone away as she had come, a dog. However, her stick with it attitude, manifested her humility, and obtained mercy.

She did not get upset or excited, because she was called a dog, as she asked for the blessing, and prayed for mercy, but she said, Truth, Lord;" "Thou hast called me a dog, and truly a dog I am, I acknowledge my name: it is the Truth that speaks: but should I be refused this blessing. Ok I am a dog; the dogs eat the crumbs from which fall from their masters' table.' I am asking a moderate and a small blessing; **I do not want to sit at the table**, I only seek for the crumbs.

See, how the value of humility is set before us! The Lord had called her a dog; and she did not say, "I am not," but she said, "I am."

And because she acknowledged herself to be a dog, immediately the Lord said, "Woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou hast asked."

See, how in this woman who was a Canaanite, that is, who came from among the Gentiles, and was a type, that is a figure, of the Church, the grace of humility has been eminently set before us.

For the Jewish nation, was puffed up with pride, because to them it had been voted for to receive the Law, because out of this nation the Patriarchs had proceeded, the Prophets had sprung, Moses, the servant of God, had done the great miracles in Egypt which we have heard of in the Psalm, had

led the people through the Red Sea, when the waters divided, and had received the Law, which he gave to this people.

This was that at which point the Jewish nation was lifted up, and through this very pride it happened that they were not willing to humble themselves to Christ the author of humility, and the restrainer of proud swelling, to God the Physician, who, being God, for this cause became Man, that man might know himself to be but man.

The humility of this mother lead Jesus to say, "I have not found so great faith!" Here is the amazing thing. After describing both her calamity, and the intensity of the disease, she pleads the Lord's mercy, and cries aloud; and **she said not**, "Have mercy on my daughter," but, "**Have mercy on me.**" It was the integrity of this woman's plea that Christ did not say, "Let thy little daughter be made whole," but, "**Great is thy faith**, be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" to teach us that the words were not used at random, nor were they flattering words, but great was the power of her faith.

Earlier in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus was eating with the tax collectors and "sinners" when the Pharisees saw this they asked His disciples, "why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and "sinners?"

Jesus response was, "it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Christ the Good Shepherd calls to His sheep, you and I. He is seeking those who are humble showing mercy and the faith to lead us to eternal paradise.

Let us learn from the love of this mother for her daughter the power that comes from humility, mercy and faith.

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