

"Confessional Confidence" Matthew 15:21-28 Reminiscere
miserationum 2023

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each and every one of you this day.

"Lord, help me." These words of the Canaanite woman may well be the most difficult words in the entire English language. Her approach is in stark contrast to most of what has come to be known as Christianity today—at least the Christianity that gets the most publicity, filling coliseums and bank accounts.

Our problem—beyond sin, death, and the devil--God's Word is not enough. Of course, God's Word not being enough is precisely why we are in the predicament we are. It is, in fact, the essence of sin, the reason for death, and the heart of the devil's lie.

In today's Gospel, Jesus continues the theme from Quinquagesima that launched us into Lent. Where Jesus goes He goes to save and heal. The Quinquagesima, 50 Days Gospel, set Jesus going up to Jerusalem to suffer mocking, flogging, and death on the cross, along side of healing a blind man as part of the same journey.

Saving the world is not a bigger, more important thing than healing one person. And healing one person is no smaller, less important a thing than saving the world. Not to God anyway. It is all part of the will of the Father, the work of salvation for which He sent

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His Son, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit through the holy Christian Church--the Communion of saints, which is the body of Christ here on earth. And so we see today that God sends His Son to do both and that they are ultimately the same one thing—the same one thing that begins in Baptism and is fully realized on the Last Day of Resurrection.

In going up to Jerusalem and the cross, Jesus never loses sight of those He meets on His way. And neither should we—either in how we treat our neighbor or in regard to our faith that he provides for us and our loved ones in our time of need here. But we do, just as His disciples did. We need object lessons, so to speak. And so God provides another one for them and for us as we make the journey of the cross with our Lord—in the church year and in the life of the Baptized.

The disciples were literally begging Jesus to send her away because she was annoying them on their way to more important things, interrupting their time with Jesus. How often do we do, or at least think the same? Whether in church, especially in meetings where we seem to deal with everything but God's Word and pretend it is the things...or in our every day lives, where we always seem to have more important things to do, bigger fish to fry, other people to talk and interact with other than the ones we are with at the time.

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This Gospel account is for our sake—an illustration of God's Word in action. The CW knew He would heal her daughter one day. It was, in fact, the very reason He took on flesh and took that flesh to the cross. We need to see He has indeed done so. And we will continue to see it throughout this season of Lent. For our preparation, our fasting and prayer, is not only to prepare us for our salvation, but also for our service, our alms giving by which God sends His salvation to our neighbors.

Indeed, this is what we are praying for, what our dear Savior is teaching us in the Lord's Prayer. From our Catechism: Our Father who art in heaven. What does this mean? God would thereby [with this little introduction] tenderly urge us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him confidently with all assurance, as dear children ask their dear father.

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. The Canaanite woman teaches us this also. But let us learn also learn from the disciples, as our Lord provides them with the object lesson of the Canaanite woman, and they become an object lesson for us.

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The First Petition. Hallowed be Thy name. What does this mean? God's name is indeed holy in itself; but we pray in this petition that it may become holy among us also. How is this done? When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead holy lives in accordance with it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven. But he that teaches and lives otherwise than God's Word teaches profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, Heavenly Father.

The Second Petition. Thy kingdom come. What does this mean? The kingdom of God comes indeed without our prayer, of itself; but we pray in this petition that it may come unto us also. How is this done? When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life here in time and yonder in eternity.

The Third Petition. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. How is this done? When God breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow the name of God nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world,

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and our flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith unto our end. This is His gracious and good will.

Yes, this is His good and gracious will. That we look to Him for every need of body and soul, salvation and life—for ourselves, and for others even as ourselves. And, this, dear children of God, is that for which Lent prepares us. To receive life and do His will for the sake of the life of others. Indeed, this is the life of the Baptized and the way of the cross—not just that we receive our daily bread, and the forgiveness of sins, but that we live to give these to each and everyone we meet even in the midst of our suffering.

For this, we worship Jesus with the Canaanite woman, praying, “Lord, help me!”--that we along with these, be delivered body and soul from every evil and into the kingdom of heaven—in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.