

The Second Sunday in Lent

Text: St. Matt. xv. 21.

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said. Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

Only twice in the Gospels does our Lord reach out to the Gentiles who have come to Him begging for mercy. Here in this reading we see a woman begging for mercy and asking Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus at first reminds her that He is there for the chosen people of God, the Jews, yet He sees her faith is great and so He grants her request and heals her daughter.

Often times we call upon the Lord in the trials that face us in life. We sometimes cry out in desperation, hoping our Lord will hear us not unlike the woman in this story. Yet we cannot help but wonder if God hears us and is willing to answer our cries. We hope for the best, hope our petitions will be granted, hope that He will give us what we ask.

But unlike the woman in this Scripture passage, are we willing to accept anything the Lord may wish to grant us? Would we be satisfied with the crumbs? Often times when we pray we always try to follow the example of our Lord when He was praying to the Father in anticipation of His upcoming trial and crucifixion. He asks the Father that if it were possible, that the cup He was to drink of could be set aside. Yet He finishes His prayer with, "Not my will, but thy will."

The approach of the woman in this Bible passage and our Lord to the Father was one of humility and hope, but also with the belief that whatever response God gave, that they would accept what they are given in full faith and confidence that God's will was to be trusted as being best for them.

In that, as we consistently hear during Lent, we must give up ourselves to God's will and put our total trust in Him. We must be willing to accept that whatever we ask, will be granted according to God's desire for us and if we truly trust Him and put our faith in Him, that we will come to understand that His will is indeed best for us.

It is the desire of our Lord that we should hear His words and in doing so, become a new person who indeed will see that full trust and faith is indeed the path of righteousness. St. Paul in his letter to the Church in Thessalonica says:

God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

God understands that giving ourselves over to Him can be a struggle. For this reason as St. Paul points out, God has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us, strengthen us and help us deepen our relationship with Him. Our difficulty is in sometimes realizing that God dwells within us, and that His Holy Spirit, imparted to us in Baptism, is at work in us, if

we let it. This marvelous gift connects us to the Father and to our Savior; it connects us to our fellow Christians and in fact connects us to 2,000 years of believers in Christ's Holy Church.

What a wonderful legacy, what a wonderful heritage, what a wonderful blessing because the Holy Spirit of God is not some benign connection, but one that is alive in us as God Himself is alive. In knowing this, we see that even the smallest crumb is a mighty blessing, and one that we should nurture and seek to grow.

The peace that can fill our lives is the peace that comes from knowing God, from trusting God, from total faith in God and in humility before God. It is in knowing that He loves us and that everything of His kingdom is for us. That is what should give us unceasing hope and great joy.

Our temporal world will pass away. All that we have will pass into other's hands, and like the reminder on Ash Wednesday, what we are in the here and now will someday be dust. Yet we know that this world is but a brief stop in eternity and that someday we will be with God, in His glorious presence, and all that was important to us here, will be forgotten. It is the hope offered by our belief in the one true, living God. It is a hope that comes from no other worldly faith.

A common theme at funerals is the concept that is often contained in the messages on those sad days that in Christ there is eternal life, salvation, peace, joy and immeasurable love. Often the end comment is, if you get a better offer, take it.

In thinking about that, would we not want the smallest crumbs from God's table rather than all the riches of the world? What great man ever lived forever? What great wealth ever bought eternal life? What can the greatest gift of the world offer compared to the gift of the grace of God?

O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

Great should be our faith and with that the desire to know and thank God for holding us up in eternity even as all around us passes away. No wealth of the world can buy it, no power of the world command it. It is a simple gift given out of love from a father to his children. For each of us, it should be our desire, that which we want more than anything else, to live for our Lord in the world, and be with our Lord in paradise. A wonderful gift of peace that passes all human understanding, which should fill our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. AMEN