

Reminiscere (“Remember . . .” Ps. 25:6)

Second Sunday in Lent

8 + March + 2020

Genesis 32:22–32

²²The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

²³He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. ²⁴And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until

the breaking of the day. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

²⁷And he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.”

²⁸Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

²⁹Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.” ³¹The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. ³²Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip on the sinew of the thigh.

1 Thessalonians 4:1–7

¹Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ²For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

Romans 5:1–5

¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Matthew 15:21–28

²¹Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” ²³But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

In the name of Jesus. Amen

²¹Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”

So begins one of the most heart-wrenching cries for help from a woman outside the chosen people of Israel. This desperate woman hears from the Lord Jesus words which sound so strange to be coming from *His* lips, words which sound terse and unloving, words which sound inattentive, words which sound even cruel and heartless. Even though the Canaanite woman cries out, **“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David,”** when we hear Jesus’ response we can only wonder, “But is He? Is the Lord merciful?”

Jesus was traveling through the region of Tyre and Sidon. These were gentile cities on shore of the Mediterranean Sea, near of the land of Israel. The Canaanites were worshippers of pagan, false gods. The Lord instructed the Israelites to bring His judgment upon the Canaanites for their unbelief in Him so they would not lead the Israelites or any other believer away from their worship of the only true God.

An ancestor of Jesus had been in this land before, among the Canaanite people. Hear what happened in the land of Canaan when the father of the Hebrew people was there:

¹Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

⁵And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of *Canaan*. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him (Genesis 12:1-3, 5-6).

How fascinating that 2,000 years after the Lord had made such promises to Abraham, and Abraham had responded by building an altar and worshipped the Lord in the land of Canaan, a descendent of the Canaanite people a descendent of Abraham, in fact *the* Descendent of Abraham, the Lord-made-flesh Himself, and Jesus helps the offspring, the daughter of a Canaanite woman. Whereas Abraham had called upon the name of the Lord in the land of Canaan, we find centuries later a Canannite woman calling upon the same name of the Lord.

So, again, we remind ourselves this woman comes to Jesus and cries out, **"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."** The woman uses all the right words. The words she used give the impression she is someone she is not. She is not a descendant of David. She has no right to bother Jesus. But she has heard of what Jesus can do. She has left her poor demon-possessed daughter behind. She has traveled to Him. She has cried out to Him.

. . . [And Jesus] **did not answer her a word.**" If, at first it was not amazing that a Canaanite woman sought out Jesus for help, it is even more amazing that Jesus ignores her. Nothing. Not a word, not one word from His holy lips.

**²³ . . . [Jesus] did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.”
²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”**

The disciples are—what? Embarrassed? Annoyed? Prejudiced against who gets access to Jesus? It would seem by their reaction and request that the woman didn't call out to Jesus just once, but time and time and time again. The disciples want Jesus to do what she wants and just get her out of there, and therefore, they want Jesus to heal the demon-possessed daughter for the wrong reason. Jesus, you will note, ignores their request, too.

²⁵ . . . she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.”²⁶And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

Ah, now the Canaanite woman admits she isn't a Jew, even though she was speaking and using words like one. She has admitted the truth. She has no claim on this descendent of David named Jesus. She has finally come clean. But she hangs on to every word of Jesus, digging for the promise, begging for the “yes” she knows is there. In her confession this beleaguered woman admits she has no right to be at the feet of this Man except that she has heard of this gracious and loving God-made-flesh named Jesus.

²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Jesus commends her for her bottom-of-the-barrel confession of trust and hope in Him, out of the love for her daughter, and for her seeking the only One who could help her. Only twice in the Gospel of Matthew is the faith of anyone praised—and both of them were Gentiles, the

Canaanite woman and the centurion, whose servant Jesus healed (Matthew 8:5-13). This is an unspoken commentary on the disciples whose faith is NOT commended. Jesus commends the faith of a Gentile—and a female Gentile at that! The Good News of Jesus Christ breaks the tired, worn boundaries of the old Israel and that Good News begins to trickle out to many others—a woman from Canaan, the Samaritans, the Gentiles of all walks of life—and you, until the Day of Pentecost when the dam breaks and the Gospel begins to spread throughout the whole world.

What happened to the Canaanite woman happens to each and every one of you each and every Sunday. Recall the very stark and painfully honest words we speak at the beginning of a communion service:

O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. (Divine Service, Setting 3)

Or as we speak during the Sundays in Lent:

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. (Divine Service, Setting 1, 2, 3, 5)

The world listens in and says, “Poor? Miserable? Sinful? Unclean? Well, how high is the self-esteem of these people at Christ the King Lutheran Church? These are not words of people who think well of themselves or see themselves in a positive light. I wonder what is up with them? What a downer, to think one is poor and miserable and a sinner. These are not

people who believe in a God who loves them. They really could use some serious help.”

What is not understood by the world but what is understood by you is that as sinners we might as well lay all the cards on the table right up front. See, nothing hidden up the sleeves, no ace in a pocket, no marked cards to try to pull a fast one on God. Being brought into the presence of the most Holy God by the Holy Spirit who has called and gathered you here this morning and enlightens you with His Word in this place, the Holy Spirit also then begins His work in you through the Word of God. The Law must first have its way with you. From First John you regularly confess:

Exhortation

- P If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- C **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** (1 John 1:7-8)

Just like the Canaanite woman, you yourself know—or if you don’t know or you have forgotten or you somehow you’ve become disillusioned by your own self-righteousness—God’s Word then sets you straight, just like Jesus’ words set the Canaanite woman straight—but just like the Canaanite woman you come before God unworthy, with no legitimate strings to pull with God—and then God is gracious to you! He looks upon you, as He did on the Canaanite woman and says, “Now, here is one who needs My help.” For anyone who will presume to have some ace up his or her sleeve, or some good deed or work with which to impress the Lord, or some ancestral connection to Jesus, well, all of that needs to be exposed and thrown on the garbage heap. Jesus came for those who belong on the garbage heap—the sinners, the tax collectors, a Canaanite woman—and you!

Through His silence and pointed words, Jesus stretches and grows the faith of the Canaanite woman. So, also does Jesus bring you to that same knowledge. Jesus helped her; He helps you. The Canaanite woman was willing to settle for just a few nibbles of God's mercy. Just a few crumbs, Lord Jesus, some very small crumbs. That's all I want. That is all I need. And Jesus gives her—and you—the crumbs from His table. But what crumbs! A piece of bread, a sip of wine doesn't seem like much to the world, but to sinners needing forgiveness, for you who are quite aware you have no claim on Jesus except for His gracious and tender love and mercy, then His body, His blood are crumbs enough for you. To taste forgiveness is something the world apart from Christ does not have and cannot give. To taste forgiveness is something you receive—and thankfully so!

At the heart of Jesus' words to the Canaanite woman and the ridding of her daughter's demon is the cross. Ultimately, what Jesus wanted the Canaanite woman to see was not the Son of David who could perform miracles, but the Son of David who would die on the cross, a gracious and loving God who would take the Canaanite woman's sin and her daughter's sin and your sin and my sin to the ultimate end, sins wrestled to the cross and nailed there so that those sins would no longer eternally harm God's people, people from every tribe, all nations, and every spoken language. As we heard last week, at the beginning of the Lenten season, in the Garden of Eden, where Satan attempted his undoing of God's grace and mercy, God proclaimed that one day the serpent's head would be crushed even as the Seed, the Son of God's heel would be bruised. The head of the serpent is crushed by the bloody, nailed heel of Jesus. We see Jesus already begin to do that in the life of the Canaanite's daughter, and we see Jesus finish that work by His death upon the cross.

May you grasp hold of Jesus' every word and promise to you, that He is the Lord, the Son of David and that His mercy is for broken, desperate

people. May the devils and demons and Satan himself look to the cross and see their defeat. May you look to Jesus and His cross and there see God's love for you—His eternal love which keeps you safe until the very end. Amen.

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