

Matthew 15:21-28

August 16, 2020

Christ Episcopal Church

Nevertheless She Persisted

Several years ago, in the Senate Elizabeth Warren was speaking and Mitch McConnell kept trying to stop her from making her point. But she kept talking because she felt what she was doing was important. After threatening her with contempt she finished her speech. When asked later what happened Mitch McConnell said “I tried to get her to stop but nevertheless she persisted.” This became a sort of battle call for feminists who thought she was being shut down because she was a woman. A cottage industry came from the event and hats, tee shirts etc were printed with “nevertheless she persisted.” Even I was given a bracelet with that saying.

While reading this weeks’ Gospel the phrase returned to my mind “Nevertheless she persisted.” It seemed to apply to this determined woman we are hearing about this morning.

What is clear is that the woman was not going to give up but kept pleading. Ironically here was Jesus in Israel trying to convince people He was the Messiah and being challenged to prove it with a sign and here at the same time in Gentile country is a Canaanite woman who was convinced he was the Messiah.

It was love which helped her see the compassion beyond and behind the words of Jesus. The driving force of this woman’s heart was love; and there is nothing stronger and nothing nearer to God than that very thing.

This woman had faith. It was a faith that grew in contact with Jesus. It was a faith that worshipped. She began by following and ended up on her knees. She began with a request and ended in prayer. This is a lesson for us. We must first come in worship and only then with the statement of our own need.

This woman had persistence. She was undiscourageable. This woman came because Jesus was her only hope. She came with a passionate hope, a deep sense of need, and a refusal to be discouraged. Hers was a passionate desire from her soul, that made her feel like she could not and must not take no for an answer.

This woman would not be put off. She knelt before Jesus and begged him. Here he pushes her a little further reminding her of the historic distinction between the Canaanites and the Israelites. In short saying the Jews are the “children” and the Gentiles are the “dogs.” The children get fed first.

But the woman’s answer is wonderful....even the “dogs” get to eat the crumbs the children drop. She wants some small mercy of God. His saving grace for ALL people.

And we can believe that Jesus’ eyes lit up with joy at such an indomitable faith; and he granted her the blessing and the healing which she so much desired.

What can we learn from today’s lesson? There is no one who does not have a need in their lives. Some people are looking at devastating family problems. Some are looking at financial difficulty. Some are looking at disease and are wondering what the future holds. The list of problems people are facing - particularly during the pandemic - is endless.

But we need to remember that in the midst of our problems we need someone to help us. We need someone we can turn to for our solutions. We need God to work in our lives. We don’t need Him to lift every burden just the heaviest. We

don't need Him to move every mountain, just the highest. As we learned this morning we don't need the whole loaf, just a crumb.

How many of us can identify with this poor, anxious mother? Regardless of what we face in our lives today, the answer can be found in God. He can move our mountain, meet our needs, save our souls, forgive our sins, touch our loved ones...He can do it all. But we have to get to Him. We can't be afraid to call on Him. We do not need to bear our burdens alone. We must go to Jesus. He will not turn us away. God's silence is not an indication of God's unwillingness to meet our need. God's silences serve to test our faith and to remind us that He operates on a different schedule than we do.

Be persistent. Be like this poor mother. Keep bringing that need to Jesus until he answers. Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking and in His time, He'll hand you down a morsel of answered prayer. Today may be the day when God speaks in your soul. Today might be the day when His peace replaces your pain.

A little crumb from the Lord's table might be all we need today. Obstacles mature our faith. I know a God who can meet us where we are and help us get what we need.

Persist in seeking the Lord and in His time you will see every barrier fall.

AMEN