

ALL ARE WELCOME  
Pastor Jerome Evavold

<sup>21</sup>Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." <sup>23</sup>But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." <sup>24</sup>He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." <sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." <sup>26</sup>He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup>She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

When you hear this lesson from Matthew's Gospel, it is disturbing at first. Jesus refers to this Canaanite woman as a dog. She is from outside the Jewish community in which Jesus began his ministry. Now he has moved up to the area where there were non-Jewish people and this woman comes to him pleading for his help to cure her daughter.

What we see in this lesson is that like God does in up to 40 places in the Old Testament, JESUS CHANGES HIS MIND.

The human part of Jesus first shows up here as he sees her as an outsider like his other Jewish companions would see her.

By the end of this lesson we see how Jesus changes his mind.

First of all, see yourself as the Canaanite woman whose daughter is sick. Like her, imagine you have come to see Jesus as the Lord, the Son of David. In other words, you see that Jesus is almighty and human at the same time.

Of course he has the power to heal your daughter.

Unlike the Pharisees and Scribes who criticize Jesus and stay at a distance, as a foreigner you recognize that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of David, the Savior, who can help you.

Three times this woman pleads with Jesus to heal her daughter.

The first time, Jesus does not answer her. And the disciples tell Jesus to send her away because she keeps shouting after us.

Jesus says, I was sent only for the lost sheep of Israel.

A second time, the woman comes and pleads with Jesus, "Lord, help me."

Here is the troubling response Jesus gives when he says, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

He is saying that the Jewish people of Israel are the children he came to feed with his word. And this woman is like a dog, not one of them.

It is hard to hear that coming from Jesus.

But as we continue on, we learn more.

For a third time, this woman comes up with a response that seems to change the mind of Jesus.

She says, "Yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

What is she saying? Even someone like her, not seen as one of the children of Israel, but an outsider, even referring to herself as a non-human dog can come to the table of the Lord for help.

Have you ever had a time or place in your life where you did not feel welcome? Think about that.

Maybe it was in a job you had. Or maybe at a reunion or a work party you attended with a spouse where you didn't even know anyone there.

Or maybe it was a church you attended.

This is such a strange time to talk about this when we are having to worship at a distance. Sometimes we might like this way of worship. But for those of us who grew up in church every Sunday, it doesn't seem the same. The gathering and support of one another is not the same at a distance.

And yet, we want everyone to feel welcome in the way we are having to stay connected.

Jesus found himself in a situation where someone who would not have felt welcome came to plead for healing for her daughter.

At first he seemed to just ignore her yet as she kept pleading with him, he said, "woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish."

**AND HER DAUGHTER WAS HEALED INSTANTLY.**

Suddenly the barrier that separated her from the Jewish people Jesus was working with, was removed and she was welcomed into the community. What a great message that was for her and for all of us. We are welcomed into the community Jesus is part of.

What good news it is to hear that God, in this case, Jesus, changes his mind about the world and about us.

The ministry of Jesus doesn't stay in that community he started in but it spread throughout the world.

There may be times when you feel like the dogs he is talking about.

Maybe you feel like an outsider yourself.

How fair is it that God in the flesh, this Jesus would waste his love and forgiveness on imperfect people like us?

But even we like dogs will eat the crumbs that fall from the table.

God's word to us outsiders is the same as it was to the Canaanite woman.

Through Jesus, God has found us and by the power of the Holy Spirit, has given us faith and the word to us is LET IT BE DONE FOR US AS WE WISH AND WE ARE HEALED IMMEDIATELY.

Even though we are not gathered together in the same place right now, we are still connected.

There's something wonderful about being gathered as a church family. We get to know one another and to support each other.

Today we are calling this Silver Sunday when we once again calling attention to those of our church family who are 80 and over.

You have lived in faith and continue to share it with one another and we are thankful for each of you.

We are all welcomed by God to live as the family of God here on earth. GOD BLESS EACH OF YOU! AMEN!