

**<sup>21</sup> Jesus went away from there and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.” <sup>23</sup> But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, “Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.” <sup>24</sup> But He answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” <sup>25</sup> But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” <sup>26</sup> And He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” <sup>27</sup> But she said, “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her, “O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at once.**

If there is one thing on this earth which is certain (besides death and taxes) it’s that “Children are courageous”. They know how to persist, whether they understand the chances of their success or not. They can move right past any social roadblock, trusting in their goal with persistence. It’s an admirable quality, even if, most times, the battle is already lost for them.

How did we come to lose that quality as we got older? Perhaps it’s the fact that our senses are more fine-tuned as we mature. We understand social cues better. If somebody says ‘no’, then we may understand that its not an invitation to ask again. When our request is denied over and over, we might concede to the outcome. The uncertainty that comes with the development of our senses may prevent us from ever being truly confident again.

Do you ever feel that same uncertainty when it comes to your faith? When you approach God in prayer, do you feel that He is not answering your prayers in your time of need? In an intriguing way, Jesus opens himself up to a woman who is in her time of need; He drives the woman’s faith to become stronger and more confident in Him and His mercy. Jesus is also ready to mold our attitude of faith; His dealing with this woman will show us how to live confidently in faith and in love toward one another. In faith we say:

**O Lamb of God, I Come**

(I come) In humility, trusting in you alone

(I come) with compassion, bringing my neighbor

Part 1: (I come) In humility, trusting in you alone

In Matthew's account of the Canaanite woman, Jesus is in his early ministry. He had just started to recover from a long mission journey in Syria by the Mediterranean Sea. By this time, he had surely gained a reputation of credibility among Gentiles, as he had shown his power to heal people's illnesses. It is no surprise that people came to him with an expectation of power and healing.

As does the woman in our lesson. What she did is noteworthy: She came to Jesus *immediately* and unapologetically. **And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."**

This woman's daughter was cruelly demon-possessed. Imagine that pain that the mother bears on her face as she cries out to Jesus. Worry. Fear. There wasn't any known cure for demon-possession! For her, her thoughts must have been a disastrous mess. What could she do?

In her persistence she went to Jesus. And what does she say? **Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David.** What this woman confesses is important: She sees Jesus as more than just a profound healer. This man Jesus, he is the one who was prophesied to come through the line of King David. The one who had the power and authority to forgive sins and do miracles! This was the Lord! This woman was encouraged in her dependence on Jesus to come to him and ask for his mercy on her daughter. And although she received what appeared to be an unfavorable response from Jesus, she came a second time, begging in humility saying **"Lord, help me!"** Matthew relates how this woman continues to humbly seek Jesus' help, despite the obstacles in front of her.

After her second request for help Jesus approaches this woman, testing her humility! Jesus responds: **"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."** Although for us it may seem strange, Jesus here extends an opening for this woman to grasp hold of! He offers her a place in His kingdom. He doesn't call her a dog in the sense that she was an enemy of his. A close look at the Greek provides the nuance of a house-pet: a dog that was still a part of the family. The remark calls to mind that all members of the household (the children and the dogs) are under the authority of the Father.

Following these words, Matthew supplies the impression of this woman's knowledge concerning her role. Yes, she was lower in comparison with God. Yes, she was not a descendant of God's chosen nation of Israel. But she was under the same authority as were the Jews. **Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David.** She understood. She didn't complain about Jesus testing her. Pay attention to her response!

**But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."** How is it fair that even the lowest dogs receive the grace which falls from God's hand? This woman accepted God's grace with confidence-not in herself, but in her Lord. It takes humility and understanding to realize the situation. And Jesus marvels at this confession of faith from the woman...

**...For this woman brought nothing in her hand, but her dependence on God and her faith in his grace and mercy.**

In times of trouble, does God owe us a response to our prayers for mercy and help? Certainly not. We have rebelled against God in our lives. In our sinful and selfish pride we have told God to 'take a hike' as we pursue our own personal interests. We even fail to study God's Word. Often we become engrossed in ourselves and in our accomplishments, and place little room in our hearts for God's gigantic and gracious hand. But then the storms of life come. Suddenly things aren't so good. Where is our faith placed? In ourselves or upon God?

Ultimately, we are dependent upon God. NO matter how justified we think we are when we ask our Lord for something, the truth is; It's not our place. When it appears that our prayers aren't being answered to our *liking*, we complain when it's not our place. Our place is in Jesus Christ. That's why we pray in his name *according to his will*. Jesus presents himself as the perfect solution to our cries for help. As our sacrificial Lamb he was sacrificed for all the sins that plague us. To fully appreciate that we ought to understand that our total reliance upon Jesus causes us to come to him in complete humility of faith. So when we say "O Lamb of God, I come" **we come with a spirit of humility.**

Part 2: (I come) with compassion, bringing my neighbor

What a great truth of faith that this woman reveals to us in this account! As the disciples watch these events unravel, what lesson do they learn from this exchange? As Jesus spoke to them and to the woman, he was teaching them a valuable lesson, that even the 'pet dogs' are loved just as much as the children are.

As for the disciples, they were students and followers of someone they considered to be very important. In this reading they had just finished following Jesus after a long mission trip. Their goal then was to stay away from the stir of the crowds. They assumed that Jesus wanted *nothing* to do with any outside company. But now this woman becomes their business.

The woman cries out, much to their humiliation, and they themselves cry out to Jesus, *imploring* him saying, "**send her away, because she keeps shouting at us!**" You can imagine the scene: 'Send her away, heal her Rabbi, please just do whatever it takes to get this woman off our hands!'

But Jesus in his wisdom is not quick to send this woman off. Here lies a special opportunity to teach his disciples to think differently about how they had concerning the **power and scope of salvation**. He reminds his disciples of something that he told them in just a few chapters previously to this account. He says in our lesson, "**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" Yes, this would have reminded the disciples of when Jesus commissioned them earlier, when he said "**Do not go in *the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.***"

Ministry indeed has its priorities. With Jesus being on this earth for only a short time, his point clearly was that the gospel was to be given *first* to the Jews. It was not to exclude God's grace from anyone, but to explain for what promise he was sent out to fulfill by God. It shows an awareness of Israel's place in God's plan of salvation—It was through the nation of Israel, the Jews, that God issued his Law, preserved His Word, and sent His Son. But with this woman's confession of faith, it was obvious

that in some way she had received the gospel. Look at the scope and power of the gospel; as Jesus says these words “**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**”, this statement actually evokes from this woman a stronger, more public expression of faith in Him.

With this confession of hers...would Jesus perhaps be looking for a similar confession from his disciples? That Jesus is indeed the Savior of all who will believe in Him? This was a test of the disciple's compassion. Yet the disciples' silence speaks volumes. They didn't know how to approach Jesus or what to say to him after being confronted by his words. And to the woman? How should they be treating this Gentile woman who is confessing her faith in front of them?

Jesus knew their thoughts and turned his attention to the woman. Indirectly, he is teaching them as he places her needs before his own. He will show them what faith looks like, and how faith, not ethnicity or status, unites people to Christ. As she confesses her faith in her savior, **The Lord bids his disciples to have compassion as she finds her way to lasting healing and peace.**

No matter our status, no matter what job we hold, let us not forget what our place is as we come to Christ with our neighbor in prayer. It can be easy to give into prejudices against certain types of people or classes, or to feel superior to them. From the alcoholic who is depressed to the young troubled adult who is hungering for someone to care, are we quick to judgement or quick to welcome them with the gospel? Jesus bids us to think differently-we all were once unlovable, damned to sin and unworthy of salvation, but in Christ he has made us ALL justified to receive his grace. That includes YOU. That includes ME. It includes those people who are 'too hard to love'. Faith joins us together to Christ. Faith brings us together as one universal family of believers.

**Remember: Being in a family of believers is special. It is no longer about your status among others, but your united purpose as a family to love God, who guides you to love others!** As you approach others outside of church, look to show compassion. Put their needs on the same level as yours. Build others up with the confidence and love that Christ has shown you. With a spirit of humility, share the gospel with all people, not just the people who are of the same class as you. The Lord tells us how to approach Him, thus we say: “**O Lamb of God, I come**” **Having compassion on my neighbor.**

## **Conclusion**

Children have a very unique quality about them- they know how to persist. We may certainly model this child-like persistence in our faith. When we pray to God for help, let us do so boldly and confidently, not in ourselves, but trusting in his power to help, for Jesus invites you to come to him with your problems and cares. He's ready to mold your attitude of faith. With this confidence God also invites us to think differently about our neighbor. They are God's people, and we want to bring to them the peace that we have been given in Christ. Let us confidently bring them to Christ, showing compassion to them as God showed to us. Thanks be to God, Amen.

**The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**