

**ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)  
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
SUNDAY 16 AUGUST 2020**

**READINGS: GENESIS 45:1-15// PSALM 133//ROMANS 11:1-2,29-32  
MATTHEW 15: (10-20) 21-28**

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*God you speak to us as a loving Father  
Help us to take time to listen to you  
And be open to what you are saying to us  
We ask this through Christ our Lord AMEN*

*“A tightrope walker wanted to walk over the Niagara Waterfall. He asked the crowd that gathered around if they think he can do it. They all shouted yes and cheered him on. And off he went walk on this rope from the one end to the other. The crowd is all excited clamping hands. He then asked them do you think I can ride a bicycle on the rope to the other side. Once again the crowd excitedly shouted yes and over he went. Then he asked the crowd if they think he can walk over with a person on his back and all excited a gain they said yes. Then he asked for any volunteers however nobody wanted to take the risk. Nobody trusted him or had faith in him that he will take them safely to the other side”*

Today's gospel text is the story of a women's faith in Jesus Christ

In Matthew 15: 21-22 of our Gospel text we read “ *Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon A Canaanite woman who live in the region came to him Son of David she cried out have mercy on me sir! My daughter has a demon and is in a terrible condition”*

Tyre and Sidon were cities just beyond the northern border of Israel. In the Old Testament times this was the region of the Canaanites tribes.

In the Old Testament we read how God instructed Moses to send the leaders to explore the land of Canaan. That was the start of a long history of spiritual and military conflict between the Israelites and the Canaanites.

These historical events would not make the Canaanites very friendly towards Jews nor towards the Jewish God.

## *But here we have a Canaanite woman approaching Jesus*

### *Why would this woman approach Jesus?*

This woman came to Jesus because she was concerned about her daughter. The child was demon possessed and was probably acting out in violence and anger. She needed help in a desperate way.

Perhaps she had heard reports about the healing miracles of Jesus (in Mark 7 v 25 we read that this woman had heard of him). Her concern for her daughter was so deep, that she dared cross that rift between Jews and Canaanites. She was at the point where she had nothing to lose, and perhaps everything to gain. She came and cried out to Jesus for help.

She had nothing to offer him (*no great Jewish faith, no great obedience, no great religious piety, if she had any religious training, it wasn't centered on the God of Israel*) but she trusted him to give her what she need

**How many of us can identify with this poor, anxious mother. Perhaps we are at our wits end over some situation in our lives and we need help. Perhaps we have exhausted every means at our disposal and do not know where to turn for help. Maybe we need restoration and forgiveness. Whatever the need in our lives may be today; we should take a lesson from this woman: Regardless of what we face in our lives today get that need, challenge, and problem to Jesus! Don't be afraid to call on Him.**

### *Note the woman's persistence*

*In v 23 -27 we read 'but Jesus did not say a word to her. His disciples came to him and begged him Send her away. She is following us and making all this noise. Then Jesus replied I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the people of Israel At this time the woman came and fell at his feet help me sir she said Jesus answered It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs. That's true sir but the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from their master's table*

To see that her need was met and her daughter was healed, this woman had to overcome many obstacles. It seemed that she met resistance to her request at every turn. Yet, she persisted until she achieved her goal. Let's examine the obstacles she faced and which she overcame by faith.

*She had to overcome Racism and Prejudice*— When the disciples saw and heard this Gentile calling out to their Messiah, they react by telling Jesus to send her away! They wanted nothing to do with her. She was not one of their people! In their eyes, she was different and that was enough to justify them not caring about her at all.

**Although we are celebrating 26 years of Democracy we still experience some forms of racism. In our country today we have the movement of “Black lives matter”.**

*She had to overcome Rejection* – As Jesus speaks to this woman, His words appear harsh to our ears. His words must have shaken her to the very core of her being. His words probably broke her heart. First, he simply ignores her. It is as if He turns an indifferent ear to her cries for help. Then, He tells her that His whole purpose in coming to this world was to reach the lost sheep of Israel. When she persists, Jesus tells her that she is a dog and does not deserve the children’s bread. The disciples rejected her and now it appears that Jesus is rejecting her too.

**As we celebrate women’s month we read and hear stories of how women were rejected by the husbands or partners**

*She had to overcome Reality* – The realities of this situation are harsh! Her daughter was possessed by a devil. She was a member of a doomed race. These religious men did not seem to care about her or her situation at all. It must have appeared to her that her situation was hopeless. But yet she persevered she was persistent even if it is only the crumbs

**Some of us are looking at some of the same barriers today. We might be a lost person and we know we need Jesus; but we feel like we have no right to come to Him. We know we are from a doomed race. We have experienced the rejection of our friends or families. Some of us have been praying and seeking God about matters that trouble our heart. We have cried out to Him and asked Him to do this or that in our lives and there has been no answer. We feel like giving up! But my brothers and sisters let me encourage you today. Be like this poor mother. Keep bringing that need to Jesus until He answers. Keep seeking His face until He responds. Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking and in His time, He’ll hand you down a morsel of answered prayer!**

## **What was Jesus' response to the woman's request?**

He was amazed by the depth of her faith! Jesus had tested her faith with hard words and her faith had risen to the challenge! Her faith exceeded that of the people he had come to save! Here was a Gentile "dog" that had more faith than the Jewish scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and priests.

And **Jesus Rewarded Her Faith** by giving her exactly what she asked for; He healed her daughter! Her faith was so strong that she didn't ask for proof, but she took Jesus at His word and turned around and went home to her family. What a blessing! What a challenge!

## **Conclusion**

By now many of you know that I am a Covid 19 Survivor. However during the time of my sickness and isolation my faith was really tested. I went through an emotional, spiritual and psychological roller coaster. So many thoughts went through my mind and I even started questioning God. But while I was grappling with these thoughts and questions I knew only God could heal me and I just prayed and prayed and God did heal me. My fourteen days isolation (quarantine) period became a spiritual retreat for me, and my relationship and my faith in God grew stronger.

So my friends whatever obstacles, problems and challenges you are facing today Persist in seeking the Lord and in His time, you will see every barrier fall! AMEN