

## The Faith of Our Fathers

Faith takes Christ captive in His Word, when He's angriest, and makes out of His cruel words a comforting inversion. In today's Gospel, the woman says to Jesus, "You say I am a dog. Then I ask for no more than a dog's right. Let me, like a dog, pick up the crumbs under the table. Let me have what the children don't need or even what they miss—the crumbs—and I will be content." Do you see how the woman catches Christ the Lord in His own words and with that wins not only the right of a dog, but also that of the children? He let Himself be made captive, and must comply. Be sure of this—that's what He most deeply desires. (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

The woman in today's Gospel imagines the Lord will not fulfill what he has spoken, and will let his Word be false. So what does she do? She turns her eyes from all this unfriendly treatment of Christ. This does not lead her astray, neither does she take it to heart, but she continues immediately and firmly to cling in her confidence to the good news she had heard and embraced concerning him, and never gives up. We must also do the same and learn firmly to cling to the Word, even though God with all his creatures appears different than his Word teaches. May God help us in time of need of death to possess like courage and faith! (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

Today we hear about the great faith, patience, constancy and humility of a woman. She had a great faith because she implored the Savior's benevolence, saying, "Show me mercy, O Lord, son of David." It is evident that she believed that He was true man and true God. Though she was asking on behalf of her daughter, she did not bring the girl along, and she did not entreat the Lord to come to her daughter. So it is clear that she trusted that Our Lord could give her daughter health by His word. After many tears, finally she prostrated herself and adored Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'. This teaches us that she had no uncertainty concerning His divine majesty, since she said that his power was to be adorned as God's. (St. Bede the Venerable) ❧❧❧

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Today's Gospel is written for our comfort and instruction. In it, we hear how deeply God conceals His grace, and that we should not estimate Him according to our feelings and thinking, but strictly according to His Word. Jesus appears to be hardhearted to the woman, and all his answers indeed sound like "no," but they are not. We learn, then, that we must turn from our feelings and lay hold of and retain the deep spiritual "yes" under and above the "no" with a firm faith in God's Word (as this woman does). Like the woman, we can say, "Lord it is true, I am a sinner and not worthy of Your grace. But You have promised sinners forgiveness, and You come not to call the righteous but to save sinners." (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

Note the wisdom of the Canaanite woman. She did not go to those who make empty promises. She sought not useless medicines. But she came to the Lord. She asked not for James, she did not pray John, or apply to Peter, but putting herself under the protection of repentance, she ran alone to the Lord. But when she raised her petition, God, the lover of mankind, answers not a word. And while the disciples were sorry for her, they did not say to Jesus "Grant her this mercy," but "Send her away." So she did not say to them "Pray God for me," but to Jesus said, "Lord, help me." Yet the more she prayed, the more He denied. But she is wise. She does not contradict Jesus, nor is she frustrated by what He calls her. She simply says, "Yes, Lord." He calls her a dog, and she accepts the office of a dog, and then says, in effect, "I cannot leave the table of my Lord." This is why Our Lord blesses her. For she spoke not to flatter Jesus, but from abundant faith. And so she obtains, by earnest prayer to Jesus, what the Apostles could not give her. For Our Lord would rather that we should pray for our own offenses ourselves instead of having others pray for us. (St John Chrysostom) ❧❧❧

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