

ESF, Lord's day service message  
5/8/2016

**The Faith of a Mother**  
Matthew 15:21-28

*Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." <sup>23</sup> Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." <sup>24</sup> He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." <sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. <sup>26</sup> He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." <sup>27</sup> "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.*

Today's text shows us a typical example of a mother who loves her child and is willing to sacrifice herself for her child. This mother's love for her child enables her to have great faith. Jesus says to her, "Woman, you have great faith!" and Jesus performs a healing through her great faith. We can learn how we too can have great faith from this mother.

**Great faith comes from compassion**

Compassion is what makes moms so special. When a child suffers, the child's mother can feel the same suffering and does everything she can to ease her child from suffering. When a mother has compassion for her child, she will go miles in search of help for her child. She will travel late at night, on foot, in the cold and the rain in search for help for her child.

Washington Irving once said, “The love of a mother is never exhausted. It never changes—it never tires—it endures through all; in good repute, in bad repute, in the face of the world’s condemnation, a mother’s love still lives on.”

Some years ago in Canada, a cougar attacked a family while the family- a young mother with three of her children, were out on horseback. They were on their way to join their father and oldest child for a week-long camp out. The big cat jumped not once but twice at her youngest son’s horse in an attempt to drag the boy off. The boy fell and the cat jumped on him and bit down on his head. That’s when his mother did a very heroic thing. She grabbed a big stick and attacked that cat, the animal released her child and attacked her. While she battled with the cat she yelled at her two other children to get their brother and run for safety.

The children grabbed the brother and ran to the vehicle they had left about one mile away. They then went to a nearby camp for help and got a man who had a shotgun. The man went to help the mother. When he got there she was still fighting with the big cat. He fired a shot and hit the cat. The cat ran off. He then ran to the young mother’s side. She was still alive and asked him, “Are my children safe?” He told her they were and then she said, “I will die now” and she did.

In today’s text, the mother also did a heroic deed by her compassionate love for her daughter. Her daughter was suffering terribly from demon-possession. She was carrying her daughter’s pain in her own life. She did everything she could for her daughter.

She must have met many doctors. She must have spent lots of money for medicines. She must have considered all the many suggestions made by people surrounded her. She must have prayed to the god of her own people, the Canaanites. But nothing worked. She became hopeless. Then one day, she heard that a healer was

coming to her town. The healer whom she heard about was Jesus. She heard that Jesus healed many sick people who suffered from incurable diseases. And she was determined to believe that Jesus could heal her daughter. So, she came to Him and asked Him to heal her daughter's incurable disease.

But as a Canaanite woman, she had a problem going to Jesus. The problem was that she had to leave the god of her religion. Her own people might accuse her of being a betrayer when she confessed her faith in Jesus. But her love for her daughter made her courageously disown the god of her religion and come to Jesus. There was no god who could heal her demon possessed daughter. So she pressed her case to Jesus, *Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.* Then Jesus acknowledged her great faith.

Mothers, God has given you compassionate love for your children. Your compassionate love has potential to create great faith. Use your compassion for your children to come to the Lord and seek His blessing. He will certainly honor your faith.

We all can have great faith when we love people compassionately. When 5000 people came to Jesus to hear the word of God, Jesus taught them not only knowledge but also compassion. Also at the same time, Jesus taught His disciples to have compassion for the people and to have great faith that came from compassion (Mark 6:32-44).

### **Great faith comes through trials**

Mothers are willing to bear all kinds of trials while they are taking care of their children. In fact, a woman becomes a mother only by going through pains in childbearing. God uses trials to give a precious gift to all mothers. It is faith. In trials God encourages mothers to depend upon Him, to cry out to Him and to seek His mercy for their children.

The mother in this text was able to have faith in trials. She earnestly sought the Lord's mercy for her sick daughter. Mothers! Are you going through trials in taking care of your children? Do you feel hopeless in trials? Take trials as an opportunity to depend on God. Use the trials as a stepping stone to seek Lord's help and receive the Lord's miracles.

Jesus used four different trials to encourage her to have great faith. These trials are typical trials that the Lord uses to give us great faith. Let's see the trials and how the Lord uses the trials to give us great faith.

### 1. Jesus' silence

Jesus was silent on her request. Verse 23 says: *Jesus did not answer a word*. What did she think about the silence of the Lord? Did she think that Jesus had ignored her plea and did not want to help her?

God's silence on our prayer brings trials to us. When God is silent although we earnestly cry to Him for help, it is easy for us to just lose hope and give up. Yet this Canaanite mother did not give up! She endured the silence of the Lord. She kept crying to Jesus for help. Jesus did not mean denial by His silence. He was testing her faith. When God is silent, do not give up. God's silence does not mean His denial. God tests your faith through His silence. Keep trusting in Him. Keep crying to Him.

### 2. Discouraging word of the disciples.

While Jesus was silent on her cry for help, Jesus' disciples said to Jesus, "*Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.*" The disciple's negative word against her prayer may have really discouraged her. But she did not give up on her faith because of the discouraging word. Some times, believers around us may discourage our faith by their negative words. The people whom we

expect to encourage us may discourage us. But this is another trial Jesus allows us to go through. Through the test, Jesus helps us to focus on not people but Him.

### 3. Jesus' word of rejection

When the mother kept crying for help, Jesus spoke a word that seemed to agree with the disciples' suggestion to reject her request. Jesus said, "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.*" In other words, He was saying, "I was sent to help only Jews. You are not a Jew so I can't help you." It seemed to be a discouraging word. It was a strong test of her faith. But again, she did not give up. She *came and knelt before him and kept crying, "Lord, help me!"* By doing so, her faith became even greater.

When you feel that the Lord is rejecting your prayer, do not give up on your faith. Keep trusting in His mercy. Keep worshiping Him. And your faith will become stronger, stronger than you think or imagine.

### 4. Jesus' insulting word to her

Finally, Jesus responded to her cry. But the word of response did not seem to be positive. Jesus said to her, "*It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.*" There are two Greek words for dog. Kuon was used metaphorically which meant a street dog that was a scavenger and unclean. The other Greek word for dog is Kunarion which meant little dog or puppy. Here, Jesus used Kunarion to refer to the woman. Even though Jesus called this woman a dog, He referred to her as a house pet.

Jesus had a purpose when He called her a house pet. He was testing the woman's faith. She might have felt insulted by the word because Jesus treated her not as a human being, but as a pet dog by this word.

However, she remained humble, and persistent in prayer by saying, *“Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.”* She focused on the positive point in the word of Jesus. It is that a pet dog is still a part of the family. Instead of looking at this answer as a door slamming shut, the Canaanite woman looked at it as an open door. In other words, she was willing and ready to receive whatever crumbs Jesus tossed her way, because even those crumbs would be more than enough to fulfill her request.

She was able to break through the discouraging words that came her way because of one simple truth. She trusted in all the things that she heard about Jesus. She believed Him to be the Messiah, because she called Him the Son of David. She knew that He had the power to heal her daughter of the demon possession. She rested her hopes on all that she heard about Jesus.

Finally, Jesus turns His face to this woman. Now the mask came off. For a moment He concealed the great goodness of His heart with a purpose -testing her faith and making her faith great. But now that purpose was fulfilled. She passed the test. The Test was over. And it was time for Jesus to acknowledge her faith.

So, Jesus says, *“Woman, great is your faith. Your prayers are answered. Your daughter is healed.”* The word great comes from the Greek word “mega.” We have words like mega-malls or mega-churches. She had mega-faith.

### **Lessons from the mother's faith**

It is often difficult for us to recognize that trials can actually be a way for Jesus to strengthen our faith. But we must constantly remember that trials can be signs of God's discipline and blessings for us. See positive things in every trial. Try to find out something positive even in the midst of insulting words. If you are humble, you can always find something positive in every trial you face.

Don't blame trials. Don't blame people who are negative against your faith. Humble yourself always. Keep believing in the Lord's goodness. And you will be able to pass all tests to have great faith.

Spiritually speaking, our status before being Christians and after being Christians is completely different. Before being Christians, our status was less than that of pet dogs. We were dead dogs (Ephesians 2:1). But after becoming Christians we became alive and we became legitimate children of God having the right to receive all God's blessings: "*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household*" (Ephesians 2:19). In Christ, God changed us from dead dogs into citizens with His people - members of His household. We can eat at the master's table - enjoying the meat and potatoes of Jesus' labors - eternal salvation. But even if God throws us only crumbs, that's fine with us, because we remember that before we couldn't be even pet dogs in God's house.

Some of you may face severe trials today. Something difficult may be going on in your life. You don't know if you will ever find relief. You pray, you kneel, beg, and you don't understand God's response. He may be silent. He seems indifferent, even rejecting your request. When you can't get the answers that could make that pain go away, still say, "*My Lord. I believe in your goodness.*" Keep believing that someday the Lord will set everything right. Remember this word always: "*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed* (1Pet 1:6-7).