

Matthew 15:21-28

**School** has started once again here in **Osceola**, as well as in many **other** places around the United States - either face-to-face, or online. So, it probably won't be very long before the students start having to take some **tests**. Many **children**, and probably many **adults** as well, don't **like** to take tests. We have to study extra hard for them, we don't know what the teacher is going to ask on them, and they put us under a lot of pressure. And even from the **teacher's** perspective on the **other** side of the desk, tests take a lot of time to **make**, and a lot of time to **correct**. So, why do we even **have** tests if they cause so many problems? Well, tests are a **measure** - a measure of our **growth** - and since everybody is capable of **growing**, capable of learning something **new**, nobody is **exempt** from taking a test to **measure** that growth. In fact, even **Jesus** gives us tests - not **written** tests, but **verbal**, or sometimes even **psychological** tests. Jesus tests our **faith**. He wants to see how much we **trust** Him - how much we **rely** on Him - how long we will **stick with** Him. And so also in our text for today, Jesus gives a test - **A Test For The Faithful**.

In speaking about testing the **faithful**, we would probably assume that Jesus would be testing one or all of His **disciples** - and that is **partially** true. Jesus was very concerned that His disciples were growing in their understanding of His **teachings**, His **mission**, and the eventual **scope** of that mission - namely, the **salvation** of all people, both Jew and Gentile. Now although Jesus' disciples were present and involved in our text today, our text doesn't really focus on **them** and their faith. Instead, it focuses on a **Gentile** woman and how Jesus tested **her** faith. Let's take a look at how she approached this test.

First of all, notice the **reverence** this woman had toward Jesus. She came to Him crying out, "*Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!*" She called Him Lord - **Master** - the **Ruler** of her life. She recognized that Jesus was someone far **superior** to herself - that He had the ability to **help**, where others had **no** control at all. She recognized that Jesus was the **Messiah**, calling Him the Son of **David** - that one descendant who would rise again as a new **shoot** from the ancient **stump** of Jesse, in order to bring **salvation** to His people. That's quite a difference when compared to the **unbelieving** Jewish leaders, who were constantly **questioning** Jesus and His authority. **They** should have been the ones to **revere** Him, but this **Canaanite** woman was able to **see**, where they were **blind**. She didn't put forth **her merits** in coming to Jesus either, but rather, she sought **His mercy**.

Notice also her severe **agony**. She pleaded, "*A demon is severely tormenting my daughter!*" Those of you who have seen the movie [The Exorcist](#) (Part 1, 2, or 3),

or any similar movie, know the kind of **horrors** that this woman and her daughter experienced. We're not talking here about the problems associated with clinical **depression**, or **insanity**, or even a split or multiple **personality** disorder. We're talking about an individual whose body has been **invaded** and completely **taken over** by one or more of the evil beings who serve Satan himself. There are only a few select instances of this found in the Bible, and they are **not** cured by **medication**, or **shock** treatments, or any **other** human invention. They are cured **only** by the power of the **Word of Christ** - and then they are cured **immediately!** This woman was in great **agony**, but she chose the right person to approach for help.

And she approached Him out of **love** - love for her **daughter**. The woman said, "*Have mercy on me, Lord*" but she wasn't really asking Him to help **her** - the help was for her **daughter**. This woman loved her daughter so **deeply** that she actually **felt** the pains her daughter was going through, as if they were here **own**. When her **daughter** suffered, **she** suffered.

Yet, even though she was in severe **anguish**, this woman didn't attempt to **demand** help from Jesus, as though she had it coming. She was very **humble** in her request, even submitting herself to being compared to a **dog**. Jesus said to her, "*It is not good to take the **children's** bread and throw it to their little **dogs**.*" The implication was **clear**. The **Israelites** were the **children** - those who had been chosen to receive the blessings of the Savior from their heavenly Father. Taking those blessings and giving them to **others** would have been **robbing** the children. The woman was quick to recognize the divine **truth** of Jesus' statement. She said, "*Yes, Lord, yet their little dogs also eat the **crumbs** that fall from their masters' table.*" Incredible! The woman was saying, "If I am only a little **dog**, then give me only a little dog's **portion**. I don't **want** to take the bread away from the children. Help me with only some of the tiny, leftover **crumbs** which are of no **use** to Your children. But nevertheless, **help** me!" Truly, here was a **real** Israelite - an Israelite not through her **bloodline**, but a child of Abraham through her God-given **faith**.

And what an **amazing** faith it was - a faith which caused her to persevere regardless of the circumstances. She was just like **Jacob**. Do you remember Jacob at a place called **Peniel**? It was there that Jacob had wrestled with **God** as he prepared to meet his brother Esau, from whom he had been running in **fear** for the past 20 years. And even though during that wrestling match the LORD crippled Jacob's hip, so that he **limped** from that time on, Jacob refused to give up the struggle. He said, "*I will not let you go unless you **bless** me.*" The LORD **rewarded** his perseverance, and Jacob **received** a blessing - his **name** was changed from Jacob to **Israel**. Just like Jacob, this Canaanite woman was **persistent** in seeking a blessing from the

LORD.

How would **we** match up in comparison to **her**? When we come to the LORD with our prayers and requests, do we approach Him with the proper **reverence**? Do we **agonize** over our prayers, going to God with the same requests **again** and **again**, or do we **give up** after the first few tries? Do we pray for **others**, putting **their** wants and needs on the same plane as our **own**, or are we pretty much **self-centered** in our prayers? We can learn a **lot** from the example of this woman in our text. She **sought** a blessing from the LORD, and she **received** a blessing - but **not** right away.

The **test** which the LORD had laid upon her was a test of **endurance**. In fact, when she **first** asked Jesus for help, He didn't even **answer** her. He didn't give any indication that she was even **there**! Can you **imagine** that? This was the man whom she rightfully believed to be the great **Healer** - the **Salvation** of all who put their trust in Him - but He wouldn't even give her the time of day. Yet, this only **seemed** to be indifference on the part of Jesus. While the disciples felt this woman was a **nuisance** and should be sent **away**, Jesus allowed her to stay and **continue** her plea, even though He didn't respond to her at first. Then things seemed to go from **bad** to **worse**. As she continued to bring her request to Him, Jesus' silence turned to **harshness**. He told her first of all, that He was sent only to the lost sheep of **Israel**, and that it was not proper to give **their** bread to **dogs**. We would hardly think of those answers as being **encouraging**, but this remarkable woman **did**. She only saw that Jesus' **silence** had been **broken**. Although there may have been a **frown** on His **face**, there was **love** in His **heart**, as He continued to lead that woman through her test.

Why did Jesus wait so **long** to help her? Perhaps we can gain some insight by looking at a couple of **other** instances where Jesus **delayed**. The first one which comes to mind is in the **Old Testament**, where **Abraham** had to wait until he was 100 years old and his wife Sarah was 90 years old, before God blessed them with the child, **Isaac**, whom He had promised to them so many years earlier. Another example is found in the **New Testament**. When Jesus heard that His friend **Lazarus** was sick, we hear that He waited **two more days** before going to see him. During the delay, Lazarus **died**, and when Jesus finally **arrived**, Lazarus had actually been dead for **four days**! In both instances there was a **delay**, so that God would receive even **greater glory**. The same thing is true with this **Canaanite** woman. If Jesus had granted her request **immediately**, then **we** would probably never have even **known** about her exceptionally strong **faith**. But as it is, we can **learn** from her, and grow in our **own** faith - with all the **glory** going to our **God**.

God tests **our** faith too. And when He **does**, we need to turn back to God's **Word** for comfort and strength. When we do, our faith will grow **stronger**. Now, we might think that's the **end** of it. We've **passed** the test, and now God will leave us **alone**. But instead, as our faith gets **stronger**, God will **continue** to test us with even **greater** challenges. So, don't be **discouraged** by that - don't be **frustrated** - don't **give up** - don't **turn away** from God in despair. He has helped us through our tests in the **past**, and He won't let us down in any of our **future** trials either. **God Tests The Faithful**, but the tests aren't meant to be a **burden** for us - because even though we are being tested, God gives us the great **comfort** of knowing that we are going into every test clinging to the one person who has all the right **answers** - Jesus - the one who gave **Himself** for us. May God continue to **bless** us in **all** our trials, as He did this Canaanite woman and her daughter, and may He always bring us **through** them all with a stronger and healthier **faith**. Amen.