

Sermon August 16th, 2020

Jesus' Does Listen Eventually

The Canaanite Woman's story is one many of us resonate with. Her daughter is sick, and more than likely has been sick quite a while. Like any loving parent, the Canaanite Woman is doing all in her power to get her daughter the help she needs. Even though the story doesn't get into detail on who she has already reached out to. I'm sure the list is long. From friends, relatives, neighbors, to other health professionals and spiritual healers. Anyone who is willing to listen. Anyone who is able to help.

And now Jesus of Nazareth, someone who has been healing many people, especially those with her daughter's condition, is walking by. This Canaanite woman sees her opportunity. She shouts and shouts trying so hard to get Jesus' attention. Her shouting is so loud that it is getting on the nerves of the disciples. When Jesus finally responds to her, she is not satisfied with the answer.

She breaks through the barrier the disciples have created, and kneels humbly at Jesus' feet. Asking Jesus to help her daughter. When Jesus tells her that she isn't good enough to receive his help, which is a response that leaves many of us confused. Since Jesus normally responds to people's pleas with more grace. Well, Jesus' curve ball doesn't seem to deter the Canaanite woman. She digs deeper arguing that even those who are not good enough, those who are seen as dogs, can live off the crumbs that hit the floor from their masters table.

Finally, after the Canaanite woman's persistence, Jesus sees something in her that he has struggled to see in his ministry so far. Jesus sees someone who gets it. Someone who understands the gracious love of God. The love that heals us and uplifts us even when we don't deserve it. The love that falls from God's table to reach even the most marginalized people in our community. The love that she could see in Jesus even when his answers seemed to contradict this love. The Canaanite woman knew that Jesus could and would heal her daughter. Eventually.

The Canaanite Woman's story is one many of us resonate with. When someone we love is in need of help we will do whatever it takes to get them access to that help. Whether it is sitting on the phone for hours to get

through to book an appointment or going to several different health professionals to find the right diagnosis and/or treatment. Whether it is seeking out alternative treatment options when you feel the health system has let you down or working two jobs to earn enough money to send your loved one to a therapy program. Whether it is being available whenever they need to talk or sleeping in an uncomfortable hospital chair holding their hand day and night. Whether it is praying day after day hoping that Jesus will turn around and listen, or wrestling with a bible story trying to understand the healing grace you and your loved one long to experience.

Like the Canaanite woman, our persistence kicks in when we are trying to get help for those we love. We reach out to anyone who is willing to listen, and/or is able to help.

Especially to God. For those of us who live with faith we are always in communication with God when someone we love needs help. We pray and we pray and we pray. We worship regularly hoping we come away feeling reenergized to keep praying. To keep hoping in God's gracious love. We open up our bibles to find stories where God listens to our prayers.

We pray and we pray and we pray. And like the Canaanite Woman, sometimes the first message we hear from Jesus is not the message we were expecting or wanting to hear. Like the Canaanite Woman, sometimes the second words that we hear from Jesus still don't satisfy us or they confuse us. Yet, like the Canaanite woman, we see the love that dwells inside Jesus. We believe that eventually, Jesus's grace will kick in. Jesus will listen to us and act. Sometimes it is in the third message that Jesus meets our needs. Sometimes we are stuck wrestling with what the first or second message really means for us. Sometimes we have to wait longer.

What stands out for me in this interaction between Jesus and the Canaanite woman is her ability to see that God is a gracious God. That even though Jesus has come for the lost people of Israel that there is room for the Gentiles as well. That even though she is perceived as a dog, a subservient being, she still has access to the crumbs that fall from the masters table. She still has access to God's healing love.

This is what Jesus wanted to hear. That even though he comes off as being unreasonable she sees right through this, and calls him out. She isn't afraid to point out that she really knows who Jesus represents. A God who

is willing to listen to anyone. A God who is for all people. A God whose healing and love has no bounds. A God who welcomes us for who we are.

This is the grace we lean on when our loved ones are suffering. This is the grace that gives us hope that if we keep praying. If we keep worshipping. If we keep reading. We will experience God's healing love. It might not always look the way we thought it would, or be in the way we want it. But we are often left feeling healed and renewed. Feeling comforted and loved.

As the church we are invited to be a reflection of this grace. A place where everyone feels welcome. Where people can come as they are and experience God's healing love.

Sometimes we fail to be this place for people. Sometimes we too limit who has access to God's healing. But, we keep trying to reflect the love of Christ to the people we encounter. We keep leaning on the Grace of God to empower us to be better. To strive to be the kind of community where people feel listened to and healed from their wounds. Where people feel accepted for who they are.

When we are able reflect this gracious love to others we transform lives like this Canaanite woman and her daughter who can now have a fresh start to life.

As we continue to journey through this pandemic time. As we continue to experience all the other things that impact our loved ones and ourselves in this broken world. We are invited to pray. To pray and pray and pray. With the hopes that we too will experience God's grace and experience healing and redemption from this time of suffering. Eventually.

Let us pray, gracious God, we are suffering, and need your help. Give us strength to stay persistent in our faith. Give us patience to await your answer. Give us courage to lament to you when the answers we receive do not help us. Give us discernment to understand your answers when we are confused, and open our eyes to see where your healing is taking place in our lives. **Amen.**

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