



Sunday of the Canaanite

The Reading is from Matthew 15:21-28

At that time, Jesus went to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon."

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

And he answered, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Resurrectional Apolytikion in the 3rd Tone

Let the heavens sing for joy, and let everything on earth be glad. * For with His Arm the Lord has worked power. * He trampled death under foot by means of death; * and He became the firstborn from the dead. * From the maw of Hades He delivered us; * and He granted the world His great mercy.

Seasonal Kontakion in the Second Tone

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

Discussion

One of the lessons in the passage from St. Matthew is the *indomitable persistence* of this mother. Her daughter's soul is at stake. The power of evil has captured her and stubbornly will not relent.

What does this mean for us? Most likely we don't always get it right when we pray; thus Jesus' instruction to be persistent in praying—keep asking, don't stop searching, continue with your knocking.

In fact, ultimately what is most important for us is not necessarily that we receive what we ask for or find what we search for or walk through the door we're knocking on. No. Rather, what is ultimately most important is that we, like the frantic mother, discover an intimacy with the Lord by persisting in our prayer.

Prayer is being known by and knowing our God of love as our Father, our Messiah and our Holy Spirit.

Another way of stating it is that through the gift of intimacy with God; we come to see our wealth is not in what we do not have; rather, it is in what we already have been given.

Never stop praying! God is never deaf. God does not ignore his children.

God answers us in His wisdom and gives us what we need.

The important thing is that we never give up or become discouraged.

Remember the parable of the Canaanite woman – her persistence brought her into intimate union with the Christ of God. That intimacy awaits us as well.

*“Let us learn from this teacher with how much patience, humility and contrition we must persevere in our prayers. Even if we are unworthy, and even if we are sent away because we are soiled with our sins, let us learn not to turn back, but to keep humbly asking from our soul. We shall receive our requests from God.” (St. Gregory Palamas, **Homilies**, pps. 340-341)*

Both Zacchaeus and the Canaanite woman share something in common: they are tough and resilient, and take responsibility to overcome barriers. In them we have great examples of how we should live.