

St. Peter Lutheran Church  
March 1, 2026  
Second Sunday in Lent (Reminiscere)  
Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus departs to the region of Tyre and Sidon—pagan territory—not necessarily to minister in that region, but more likely to escape the heat He is receiving from the religious elites of Jerusalem. What an indictment that Jesus has to withdraw from Israel’s leaders into pagan territory to be confronted with great faith. And great faith indeed is what Jesus finds.

**And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him.** The Canaanites were ancient enemies of God’s people in the promised land. They were a Gentile nation of idolaters. In pagan territory, Jesus is approached by this pagan woman, and shockingly, this woman comes to Jesus to ask him for mercy. She **cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”**

The request is amazing considering the source and the titles she uses for Jesus are also. **“Lord,” “Son of David.”** “Lord” is what Jesus’s disciples call Him, those who know him and to whom the kingdom is revealed. “Son of David” is a title for the Messiah of Israel. How does this woman know this is who Jesus is? And if she understands this, how does she think He will help her?

St. Mark confirms in his telling of the story that the woman heard about Him. She must have heard good news of Him. She must have heard of Him healing the sick and casting out demons. She heard and she believed. So in faith, she comes to Jesus with her request to help her daughter who is severely demon-possessed.

And what does Jesus do? **He answered her not a word.** Her cries for mercy seem to fall on deaf ears. Do you ever feel like God is not listening? How often in our lives do our prayers seem to be getting no further than the ceiling above us? We cry out for help, and hear nothing and nothing happens. God appears to not be listening.

But the woman of Canaan, though she experiences this, holds on to the Word she has heard—that Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, helps those in need. In fact, she continues crying out to the point that the disciples intercede on her behalf. **His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”**

“Help this woman or else she will not let up,” they in effect say. So we too, as we cry out to God who is not listening, employ the prayers of the Church, that maybe our collective voice will reach heaven and maybe God will listen.

But Jesus answered and said, **“I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”** Now Jesus finally responds, but his words are harder than the silence had been. He seems to

clearly indicate that this woman is outside of his purview—this woman is not a child of God and not someone he intends to help. He seems to answer with a resounding, “No, I will not help her.”

And yet, the woman, holding fiercely in faith to the Word she has heard, cannot take this as a “No”. **Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”** Again, she calls Him “Lord” and makes her request to Him, worshiping Him who has seemed so callous to her plight.

And then, almost as a final blow, Jesus **answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”** Here even the woman’s pride militates against her faith—Jesus’ assessment of her is low and degrading. Israel are God’s children; this woman and the heathen nations are the dogs.

*This* is the Gospel of the Lord which the woman receives from Jesus. And miraculously, she responds, **“Praise be to Thee O Christ.”** “I will not argue with your evaluation of me,” says the lady. As the Psalmist cries, **Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.** God is right in His condemnation of us. God is just and blameless in calling this woman a dog.

And by the way, if your pride is pricked when Jesus speaks this way to you, then you are pitting your own righteousness against the righteousness of God—and you will certainly fall in His wrath. When our sin is ever before us, will we dare say to God, “you can’t say that?”

No, the woman remained in faith—she said, “Amen,” to Jesus’ harsh words concerning her. For this is truly the Gospel of the Lord. For those who are well have no need of this Physician, but those who are sick. Those who think themselves righteous cannot take God’s word of condemnation, but in their hardness of heart, they seek refuge not in God’s grace but in themselves, and so they remain under God’s condemnation.

But the woman, with perfect faith, bears the hammer of God’s Law, acknowledges her sins, confirms with Jesus that there is nothing within her that merits His aid. She is but a dog. And yet, in faith, the woman is more than happy to be that dog, for Jesus came to save *sinners!* It is the hungry who are filled, the lowly whom He exalts. So Jesus’ words concerning her do not turn her away but ever closer to Him. For she knows there is nothing good within her, she comes rather to Him for what she needs.

**And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”** She agrees—Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. Salvation is of the Jews. Israel received the words and promises of God, and from them comes the Christ. The woman doesn’t presume to force for herself a seat at that table. But she expresses the word of the Lord given through the prophet Isaiah, when God says to His servant the Christ, **‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to**

**the ends of the earth.’ ”** So the woman, happy to be a dog under the children’s table, knows the crumbs that fall after the children have eaten will be more than enough for her.

Having withstood the silence and indifference of God to her own cries, her seeming exclusion from God’s people when they had interceded for her, and the biting condemnation of God against her, her hope remains in the Lord.

**Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.**

Having wrestled with God, the Canaanite woman had prevailed. And so, she became a child, she became Israel, for she struggled with God and prevailed. She receives Jesus’ help, as she asked. Her daughter is healed. She is one of many who **will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.**

For Jesus, Lord, Son of David, when He is lifted up from the earth, draws all men to Himself. His death is for all. **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** In Him, God has had mercy on us all. In Him, our prayers are heard and answered. Faith believes this even when God is silent. Faith believes this even as evil befalls us. Faith believes this even as death approaches. Faith believes, even as it looks like the opposite, that in Jesus, all the promises of God are “yes.” Amen.