

"Keep Crying" Matthew 15:21-28 Reminiscere 2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Years ago a movie came out called "Not Without My Daughter." It is a true life story about a lady from Owosso that had to rescue her daughter from her abusive husband in Iran. Women are very protective of their children. They aren't called "mama bears" for nothing. Think then about what the Canaanite woman had to go through with her demon possessed daughter. How painful it must have been for her to witness her child in such pain and torment, listening to her say inhumane and disgusting things: having to constantly try and protect him or her from harm. She was desperate for help, and there was nothing she could do.

You can't help but feel for parents today either, especially as our world falls deeper into Satan's grasp. See the violence on our streets. See the anger over race issues. See the disgusting promotion of sex and the blatant attack against the family. Our children are desperate for meaning and purpose in their lives. They are desperate for love and acceptance. So, they are attempting to find a sense of meaning through social justice. They are attempting to establish their identity online, through pictures and comments meant to gain attention. Inside, they're sad and alone, unknowingly under Satan's grasp.

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Parents don't know what to do either. They're working and trying to provide enough money for food and rent. They are stressed out as it is with work, not to mention family and society. Many of them, like the Canaanite woman, know that their children are facing very real and terrible obstacles. They cry for their children. They try to give them things to make them happy. They want them to have help. But they don't know what to do. They don't know where to go.

The Canaanite woman KNEW where to go. When she found out Jesus was in the region, she forcefully came for him. "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!" Notice the humility and respect: she didn't demand anything of Jesus: she just asked for mercy. She calls Jesus "Lord," and she also calls Him "Son of David." The Messiah was promised to come through the line of David. She was openly referring to Jesus as the Messiah, even though she was a Gentile. Isn't that a neat thing? Somehow, in some way, even though she lived to the northwest of Israel in Gentile territory, she knew the promises of the Messiah and she trusted that Jesus was that Messiah. So, she came to Him in her moment of desperation, like God wants all of us to do.

How did Jesus respond? But he did not answer her a word. His disciples came and pleaded, "Send her away, because she keeps crying out after us." It seems so rude, doesn't it? Here we have a desperate

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woman who wants help for her daughter, and Jesus just tries to ignore her. The disciples read Jesus, and see it as a sign that she is nothing but a nuisance. Send her away. "Give the word, Jesus, and we will get her out of here."

And that's how Jesus seems to a lot of people. "I came to Jesus. I prayed. I even begged. Nothing improved. Things even got worse. I went to church, and everyone looked at me like I had no right to be there. I didn't feel welcome." So, it's not that people have forgotten who Jesus is. It's just that Jesus has seemed to have ignored them or didn't want them. If Jesus or His disciples ignored you or wanted to send you away, how would you respond? Most of us would be angry and go home.

But then again, we must remember who we are talking to, and who is answering. This Jesus is the holy God. We are mere sinners who really don't deserve any mercy from Him at all. I have no right to come before Him with the attitude that He OWES me something just because I asked nicely. I am not His god. He is MY God. I am the beggar here. He has every right to ignore me if He wants. I haven't earned a spot at His table.

But I have to dig deeper than that. Why would He ignore me, if He says He LOVES me and He commands me to pray to Him? Maybe it was

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a test of the Canaanite woman. Would she give up? Maybe it was a test of the disciples: how would they respond? Send her away. Is that how God wants us to respond to people when they need our help: even if they seem to have deserved their position in life? Maybe Jesus was giving her the opportunity to be stubborn with Him and display great humility to the disciples.

Jesus isn't done. He steps it up a notch. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and knelt in front of him, saying, "Lord, help me." The Canaanite woman doesn't deny what Jesus says or argue with Him. She just kept on crying, "I need help." When Jesus seems to ignore you, does that mean you should go away in a huff? You still have need of His forgiveness and salvation, along with a whole lot of other things. He's answered your biggest need for help. Part of the problem may be that we take the salvation part for granted. We don't bother to pray for forgiveness or mercy. All we care about is our health or our job. Maybe by ignoring us for a while on those things, Jesus can get us to remember what's important. If He seems to be ignoring you, I'm sure He has a good reason for it. Maybe he's concentrating on the bigger thing - your salvation.

He answered her, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to their little dogs." Ah, the last straw, right? "How dare you call

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me a dog!?!” Not at all. The woman catches that word, “little dogs.” She’s not a wild dog: she’s “their little dog.” He’s putting her at the table. She still can catch some scraps underneath, even as a dog. Think about the life of a dog: sometimes they get some nice scraps! Our dog isn’t starving, that’s for sure. “Yes, Lord,” she said, “yet their little dogs also eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” What a wonderful answer of faith! How often do we look at life that way? When God is saying “no” to us, what is He saying “yes” to? What door is He opening? Instead of looking at it as if Jesus were slamming the door on her, she looks at it like Jesus is opening the door wide open for her. She asks for a crumb, just a crumb, that Jesus would heal her demon possessed daughter. That crumb would change her and her daughter’s life. Jesus has powerful crumbs!

So, Jesus wants us to come to Him. No, He commands us to do so. Jesus wants us to be persistent with Him. And we have so much more encouragement to do that in comparison to what this Canaanite woman had! Yes, He calls you a sinner. Yes, He compares you to a sheep. Yes, He says you deserve death and hell. Yes, says you’re helpless. Yes, He doesn’t always give you what you want and when you want it. Have some persistence. Don’t give up so easily. Maybe God has seemingly ignored you to test your resolve. Maybe He has something better in mind. Trust that He knows what He’s doing.

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Jesus answered her, "Woman, your faith is great! It will be done for you, just as you desire." And her daughter was healed at that very hour. If I remember right there's only two times in the Bible that Jesus praises someone's faith, and they are both Gentiles. What was so great about this woman's faith? It was her humility and her persistence:

especially the object of her faith: that she kept on going to Jesus, and trusting that He would do something about her desperate need.

Imagine the joy on the Canaanite woman's face when the "mama bear" got home. Mark says that she found her little girl on her bed, cured of the demon. She must have been exhausted, but so relieved. Jesus didn't just tell her what she wanted to hear to get her out of his house. Jesus listened to her cry. Jesus answered her cry, even though she wasn't a Jew. Jesus calmed the Canaanite woman's heart. Jesus healed her daughter of demon possession when no one else could. It takes humility. It takes repentance. It takes faith. It takes persistent prayer.

Don't give up when He seems to deny you. Great faith keeps crying, and Jesus keeps answering. Jesus is still alive. He is still merciful. He still answers prayers, in His own time and place. Amen.