

## **Great Faith**

Let us pray; May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be to your glory, my God, and my Redeemer. Amen.

So, today I am coming to you with faith. I have prepared and delivered a sermon for our congregation before, but it has stayed within the four walls of our church. If I made a mistake you laughed with me and no one else ever knew. Today is a little different since this sermon is going out over the air waves. I have not seen the miracles performed by Jesus, but I believe in God's grace and I prayed really hard last night. I know that I am a saint and a sinner, and I have received his promise through my Baptism. I also know that all of you listening will give me your forgiveness if I make a mistake, because I have already experienced it. I am a part of your community and I thank you all ahead of time as I begin.

Last week Jesus walked to the disciples on the water, commanded Peter out of the boat and he obeyed. Fear overcame him and as he began to sink, he cried out for help. Immediately Jesus caught him saying to him, "You of little faith, why do you doubt?" Yet, Jesus was there for him. You have seen what I have done and still you are afraid.

Jesus and the disciples, in our gospel today, have just entered the district of Tyre and Sidon, and there is a Canaanite woman who has come out and is shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." In this single sentence she acknowledges Jesus' power and willingness to show mercy. She reminds him of her ancestral relationship to him and demonstrates her respect to him as a Rabbi and Messiah. Yet he ignores her.

This woman is not an Israelite, she is not a Jew, and she has probably never been in a church. Maybe she has heard of the miracles that Jesus has performed, but her concern for her daughter is so great that she dares to put herself out there. To suffer anything that may happen to her for her daughters' sake. She has nothing to lose and perhaps everything to gain.

During Jesus time women have little or no rights. She continues to cry out for help, annoying the disciples and they ask Jesus to send her away. Jesus responds, "I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

This woman continued, kneeling before him, saying, "Lord, help, me." He said, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." This woman did not argue with Jesus. She answered him, you are right, I am no better than a dog, I have nothing to offer you, but even a dog gets to eat the crumbs that may fall from the table. She had nothing except her trust and belief that he might help her. She trusted that he would see the depth of her need. She wore no outward trappings to make her stand out. She was just persistent. Then Jesus answered her, Woman great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

I know that Jesus came to serve the sheep in the house of Israel, I think that this may have been a bit of a turning point for him. He decided that the Canaanite woman had great faith in comparison to little faith he noted as Peter tried to walk on water. As Jesus told the crowd, "Listen and understand it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." He told his disciples that, "what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles.

Jesus was considered a radical in his day. His ideas and teachings were feared by the people who were in control of the country and of the temples. He was sent by his Father to save his sheep because they were being led by lost people. What was coming out of their mouths was defiling them.

How much different is this woman than the people who are crying out for help today. They are trusting that someone will hear them, that someone will reach out their hand and save them from a wave that will soon overtake them. Someone will save them from the demon that they can no longer fight.

We turn on the news every night and we hear of another death due to Covid-19, another death due to discrimination, war, poverty. Another child losing their home because their family has lost their ability to earn an

income. Children being held in camps similar to concentration camps erected by Hitler. In the same breath we hear lies about why all these things are taking place in one of the richest countries in the world. In fact, some of these things have been taking place for hundreds of years. People have been crying persistently and they have been ignored.

So, I go back to what I said in the beginning about you, the people of my congregation. I know that even if I make a mistake, I will receive your forgiveness. I am a part of your community. Many of us sitting here are part of a community. I am grateful that as a church we are aware that even in our county there are many people who are disenfranchised and in need. We are working with others in our community and we are always willing and able to reach out a hand to help.

I think that with all that is going on in this world; Covid-19, discrimination, government fighting government, nation fighting nation, poverty, sexism, and I can list many more.

We need to remember this- John 15: 12-17, Jesus said "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name, I am giving you these commands so that you love one another."

In the end only God will know the faith that dwells in the heart of each person. We are the only ones, however, who are in control of what comes out of our mouths. This is how we are judged by the others that walk on this earth with us. God is the Judge not us.

This love needs to be extended to all people because we are all in Gods community. We are all made in his image, whether black, brown, white, yellow, male, female, straight, gay, transsexual.

**Great Faith**- Means we need to persistent. We continue to pray, listen to God's word, serve the church, feed the poor, help, the sick , take care of the earth, work hard, take care of our families and the elderly and the list goes on. As Christians we need to be persistent.

We were chosen by Jesus, and this was confirmed in our baptism. Nothing can separate us from our God. We are Saint and sinner and thank goodness we have grace.

Amen