

A Praying Mother

Matthew 15:21-28 ▪ Panha M. Doeung

Introduction

Judson Wheeler Van DeVenter wrote the famous hymnal many churches used during the invitation or altar. It is called "I Surrender All." He also penned a song in 1895 called "My Mother's Prayer." Listen to these beautiful lyrics.

I never can forget the day
I heard my mother kindly say;
You're leaving now my tender care;
Remember, child, your mother's prayer.

Whene'er I think of her so dear,
I feel her gentle spirit near;
A voice comes floating on the air,
Reminding me of mother's prayer.

I never can forget the voice
That always made my heart rejoice;
Tho' I have wandered, God knows where,
Still I remember Mother's prayer.

Whene'er I think of her so dear,
I feel her gentle spirit near;
A voice comes floating on the air,
Reminding me of mother's prayer.

Tho' years have gone, I can't forget
Those words of love--I hear them yet;
I see her by the old arm-chair,
My mother dear, in humble prayer.

Whene'er I think of her so dear,
I feel her gentle spirit near;
A voice comes floating on the air,
Reminding me of mother's prayer.

I never can forget the hour
I felt the Saviour's cleansing power;
My sins and guilt He canceled there;
'Twas there He answered mother's prayer.

Whene'er I think of her so dear,

I feel her gentle spirit near;
A voice comes floating on the air,
Reminding me of mother's prayer.

We have been talking about prayer. Today, I want us to look at a story in Matthew about another mother's prayer. Turn with me to Matthew 15, and let's see what we can learn from this story.

Read Matt. 15:21-28.

Lesson

This story has always been strange to me because of the way Jesus answers this woman. Here's a Canaanite woman who was at the end of her rope. She was desperate to get her daughter the help and the healing that she needed.

Imagine for a moment what she was going through. You've carried this child inside your womb for nine months. You went through the pain of child birth. You nursed her. You fed her. You watched her grow. You watched her take her first step. You rejoiced when she said her first word. You remember how she seemed to be getting smarter every day.

But then one day she gets sick. Maybe she's had a cold here. And a sore throat there. Perhaps even a touch of the flu. But nothing like this.

She would scream and holler. You can't put new clothes on her because she'll tear them off. Her hair is a mess. Strange voices come out of her mouth. She can't eat. She can't sleep. She can't play. There's a lost look in her eyes. A look that let's you know that this is a scary situation.

Can you imagine how helpless this mom felt? She's losing her little girl. She's running out of time. And she doesn't know what to do.

Some of you know what I'm talking about. You know what it's like to have someone sick in your family. You've felt the anguish. You've shed the tears. And you also know that if you had the power, you would do anything you could to make that person better.

Then one day, Jesus comes to town. This woman had heard about Him.

- Chp 8 ~ healed the centurion's servant in Capernaum
- Chp 9 ~ healed the paralyzed man in Nazareth and raised a girl from dead

And if anyone can save her little girl, it was Jesus!

The woman must have told herself, "This might be my last chance to get some help for my little girl! This may be my only hope."

Her little girl is demon-possessed! This is a serious problem. This kind of problem is not one you can take to any doctor or even a psychiatrist and give her medication. She's probably done all she

could and spent all her money.

There's only one thing left to do. She needed a liberator, a deliverer, a Savior.

And so we find this woman coming to Jesus in v. 22 crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David, My daughter is suffering terribly! She's possessed by a demon!"

What's amazing about this woman is that she's a Gentile. Not only is she a gentile, she has a better understanding of who Jesus is than some of His own Jewish people! She addresses Him as Son of David. The Jews know that the Son of David would be the Messiah. In Judaism, Messiah is the Anointed One, who would be the Liberator and Savior. This woman understands that Jesus would be that Savior and Liberator and so she cries out to him for help.

And we would expect Jesus to reward this woman accordingly, right?

No, he didn't do that. Instead we find Jesus not saying anything in v. 23. You would think he rushes to her aid, but he says nothing. He doesn't agree to follow her home. He doesn't acknowledge her or try to comfort her. Instead, he said nothing.

We all can relate to this woman. How many times have we prayed for something with all our heart? We ask God to come through in a mighty way. We beg God for a miracle! We trust God for a breakthrough. And nothing happens!!! Just Silence.

One of the hardest things to understand is the silence of God. For many of us we're not comfortable with silence. We want God to answer our prayers immediately! We want God to respond right now!

But what we need to know is that God doesn't always answer prayer right away. Sometimes God says 'Wait.' 'Just trust Me.'

Psalms 37:7 says, "Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

The silence of God means that we're going to have to wait and trust! But that doesn't mean we don't stop praying and asking.

Any of you like to wait? It's hard to do, isn't it? We don't like to wait. We're like the man who prayed, "Lord, give me patience, AND GIVE IT TO ME NOW!!!!!"

And when we feel that God doesn't give us the answer we want right away, we give up. We quit praying. Then we try to handle things our way.

But what's so beautiful about this woman is that she refuses to give up. She keeps praying. She keeps crying out. She keeps pleading. She keeps hoping and trusting that the silence will be broken. And that Jesus will give her the answer that she desires.

And notice the disciples' reaction in v. 23. They see their Master's silence and misinterpret the silence as rejection.

So they tell the Lord, "Send her away! She's shouting at us. She's a nuisance! We don't need to help her. Just send her away."

But Jesus doesn't send her away. Instead He wants to know where this woman is coming from. He wants to know if her faith is borne out of desperation or if it stems from a pure understanding of who Jesus is and what he's all about.

When we pray and God doesn't answer us immediately, it is not that he doesn't hear us or care. Sometimes He puts us to the test. I know I have failed many tests due to my lack of understanding of who Jesus is and what he's all about. I know I have failed many tests due to my lack of faith.

And so in verse 24, he tests her. He says "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

My response would have been, "Well, Jesus, if that's the case, I guess You don't want to help me. Sorry for bothering you."

But in v. 25, this woman wasn't going to take 'no' for an answer. A mother's love will compel her to do anything she can for her child.

Look again at v. 25. She was willing to get on her hands and knees and beg Jesus. "Lord, help me!"

Aren't those beautiful words? Our Lord longs to hear our cry, "Lord, help me."

What I love about this mom is that she was not there to discuss theology with Jesus. Nor was she going to debate Jewish doctrine of salvation. She just needed Jesus' help. "Lord, help me."

It reminds me of Jacob wrestling with the angel and says, "I won't let you go until you bless me! I won't let you go until I have the help that I need!"

But Jesus has one more test for her in v. 26. He says, "It's not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

This is where I find it so strange for the longest time. It sounds harsh, doesn't it? It seems like Jesus is referring to her as dog. To refer to someone as a dog is insulting. Remember when David goes out to fight Goliath with his stick and sling shot. When Goliath saw him, he was insulted and cried out, "Am I a dog that you come to me with a stick?" I always find that statement quite amusing.

In Jesus' day, the dog was the most miserable creature on the face of the earth. Most of them were wild. They roamed the streets during the day. They stayed up and barked all night and probably carried all sort of diseases.

But the worst thing about them is that they would eat almost anything. They would eat garbage left lying on the streets and sidewalks. They would eat dead animals. They were a disgusting creature roaming the streets. And so when Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs, this is the kind of dog they had in mind! The Jews looked upon Gentiles and even half breed with hatred and contempt!

In verse 26, the Lord uses a different word for dog! Instead of using the derogatory word to describe a nasty stray dog, Jesus uses the Greek word 'kunarion.' (koo-nar'-ee-on) Kunarion translates "a little dog" or "a puppy." (a house dog)

On the surface, it still seems like a rude rejection from Jesus. But this courageous mother of faith sees in that word a glimmer of hope. I think she sees a compassion and a love in Jesus' eyes that by reading the printed word we might not be able to see.

And so in verse 27, she says "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table." So she understands that Jesus was not using a derogatory word to address her, but a house friendly dog who is allowed to roam around its master's table.

The woman's reply is powerful. Basically, what's she's saying is this: "Lord, you can call me anything you want. As long as my daughter and I can have a crumb of your blessing, a crumb of your healing power, a crumb of your love, You can label me any way you want to label me! Just heal my little girl! Just make her well!"

And listen to our Lord's response to the woman in v. 28. "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish."

Was her prayer answered? Absolutely!

Conclusion

What a beautiful story of a mother praying with great faith and courage. And there is a connection between faith and prayer. Both please the Lord greatly. God delights to hear our prayer when we pray in faith. And Hebrews 11:6 says, "without faith, it is impossible to please God."

To be a people of great faith is to be a praying people. When we are a praying people, we are living out our faith in God. So there is a connection here. When your prayer and your faith are persistent, you will be rewarded with divine blessings.

Some of you here today may be like this mother. You have been praying for a long time. You are struggling and hurting. You're desperate. You feel lost. You're heart-broken about a child or a problem. You're down and discouraged. You're sad. You're confused. You're alone. Maybe you feel that there is no hope.

But the answer is there is enough crumbs for you. There is blessing available for you. God has not forgotten you. Keep on praying. Keep on crying out to Him, "Lord, help me. Give me a crumb of your bread."

God longs to hear your prayers. Don't give up praying. And when you pray in faith, believing, he will come through for you.

Pray with me...