

THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Twentieth Sunday of the Year

In the Gospel reading for today, we read that after Jesus had yet another “run in” with the religious leaders who had come from Jerusalem to scrutinize His actions and criticize His failure to follow the ceremonial traditions of the elders, He and His disciples withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon, two Mediterranean seaside villages northwest of the Sea of Galilee.

From a distance, a Canaanite woman saw, recognized and cried out to Jesus, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” Surprisingly, He did not respond to her at all! He was not “ignoring” her. He may, instead, have been testing the tenacity of her faith. So, with a faith that wouldn’t give up, she kept crying out to Him – to the point that Jesus’ disciples begged Him to “send her away!”



At that time, Jesus finally did respond to her, telling her that His ministry is only to the children (lost sheep) of Israel. But even this response – His recognition of her – is enough to embolden her to come closer to Him, throw herself at His feet and beg Him “Lord, help me!”

He then said something to her that seems to our ears as even more harsh and “off-putting”... He told her that it is not right for Him to give the blessings that belong to the children of Israel to the dogs that surround them! With a faith that just won’t give up, she told Him she believed that He had more than enough mercy, grace, love, care, power, help and healing for the children of Israel, for her and for her ailing daughter. What GREAT faith she had!

Jesus saw her faith, commended her, granted her request and completely healed her daughter “from that very hour.” Hers was a great faith that called Him “Lord” or “Master.” Her faith caused her to come on behalf of her daughter. Against all odds, even when it appeared that she was being ignored and even turned away, she trusted, believed and hoped in Jesus! Her tenacious faith kept hanging on to the hope that He would have mercy and help her; and He did!

Most of us at some time or another have felt like we were “at the end of our rope, and just barely hanging on?” perhaps it a situation at work; with our health or that of a loved one; maybe our family – or someone near us – is in crisis. Does it seem, at times, that God is ignoring us, or at least distant and unapproachable?

It is at times such as these, against all odds, that God calls us to trust, believe and hope in Jesus! Our gracious Heavenly Father welcomes all who come to Him by faith.

He does know, love, hear and provide for us as He knows is best for us. Chiefly, God shows His mercy, grace and help for all people through the cross of Jesus – through His life-giving sacrifice for our forgiveness and the salvation of the entire world!

As we live out our faith through trials and testing, our faith grows into the “Great Faith” which Jesus commends – a Great Faith which invites us to come to Him; empowers us to seek Him every day, in every situation; and enables us to trust Him completely.

May God graciously grant you that kind of faith – “A Faith that Won’t Give Up!” – a faith that trusts your Saviour won’t let go of His promises, and carries you safely through this world and eventually into the arms of your loving, waiting Saviour in the world to come!