

It's well documented that in the first century world of the Mediterranean there were many faith healers of many different faiths. And whether faith healer, holy man or woman, shaman or physician, nearly all of them were in the business of selling their services. As their fame grew, they could expect hefty sums for their cures or even for their attempts at cures.

Jesus was a rare exception. He didn't sell cures or healings. They were acts of mercy and pity. But on the occasion we read about in today's Gospel, Jesus has retired some distance from his usual territory in Galilee to the region of Tyre and Sidon, a day or two's walk to the north east, where he could get some quiet time with his key disciples. This is the back story for this foreign, translate "pagan" woman approaching and begging this famous Jewish healer to drive the demon from her daughter.

He tries to tell her that he isn't empowered to work outside his faith, but she persists. Which causes Jesus to also up the ante. But before we go there, let's look at how this non-Jew, supposedly non-believing woman addressed Jesus from the beginning, as "Lord" and "Son of David." Both of which could just be a little cultural knowledge she picked up and was using to pump up his ego. Okay, what does she really think? Is she just playing at humility or does she really mean it and does she really believe Jesus is what she needs?

For the sake of accuracy, we could translate what Jesus says as "It is not right to take the children's food and throw it to the family pets." The word used means "pets" not "wild dogs." It's a slightly kinder image and sets up the woman's reply, "Even Fluffy and Rover eat the scraps that fall from the family table." And Jesus is impressed! Her faith and her humility are both genuine and solid. She is as much a believer as anyone.

This exchange is for the sake of the disciple more than anyone. We, 20 centuries later immediately jump to judgment, why should she put up with such abuse!?! Friends and neighbors, this woman has been watching her child go through the torments of hell, perhaps quite

literally, for who knows how long, with no end in sight. Compared to the abuse her child has been put through, this little exchange with Jesus and the stink eye she took from the disciples were nothing. She came to Jesus know he was what she needed, and her tenacity was rewarded. For the disciples looking on, each had to confront two realities. First, Jesus is most impressed with great faith and great humility. Second, they each had to ask, is my faith strong and would I humble myself before God as she did?

Those questions haven't changed for disciples these 20 centuries later. Is my faith strong enough that I would rather be humble before God even if it means being humiliated before others? Am I a disciple of Jesus and a believer in the Triune God first and foremost, even when others want me to be a Democrat or a Republican first and foremost? Do I follow the values and morals of my religious beliefs first and foremost even when other want me to follow this or that movement first and foremost? Am I true to what God created me to be first and foremost even when others want me to be or support what they want to be?

Our faith in Jesus Christ has made us adopted children and full heirs of the Kingdom of God. We don't eat the scraps that fall from the table, we have a seat at the banquet table. When we follow something other than the plan we **know** as God's plan, we don't just eat scraps, we make a choice to eat out of the dumpster. It is far better that we be children of our heavenly Father, freed from the winds of political pressures and popular conventions that blow us from one novel idea to the next. To borrow an old image where we will each have a crown in heaven incrustated with the jewels of our good deeds; there are no jewels in the crown of heaven for popularity or political correctness. With our sight fixed on Jesus, as was the Canaanite woman's in today's Gospel, not letting anything or anyone turn us aside from our goal; to love God, to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and to follow his teachings, this will lead us to the heavenly banquet, and it will lead us to do right and to live well in this life.