

Text: Matthew 15:22-28

Theme: Mercy for Dogs

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew the fifteenth chapter verses twenty-two through twenty-eight.

Boys and girls, I pray that you are doing well today. Do you know what this is? Yep, it's a dog. Do you love dogs? I know you love both dogs and cats. They love all of the pats and attentions that we can give them. Have you ever been called a dog? No? That's a good thing! Yet, Jesus calls a woman a dog in our Gospel reading today. Why does he do that? Ponder that question as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

### **Dog! What's going on?**

A woman from Canaan, the region of Tyre and Sidon. She approaches Jesus because her daughter has a demon. She begs Him to heal her daughter. She is so insistent in her request that even the disciples beg Jesus to do something, anything, she is becoming an annoyance to them. "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." We would expect that Jesus would do so. He has healed others why not this woman's daughter?

Jesus gives the reason why He will not. He says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Sent to the people of Israel, and this woman? She is an outsider to Israel and to its promises. In the plan of Salvation, Israel has predominance. As the Son of David, Jesus had come to offer to His own people the kingdom promised through David centuries before. Thus it was inappropriate for Him to bring blessings on Gentiles before blessings fell

on Israel.<sup>1</sup> It would be wrong of our Lord to take what rightly belongs to Israel and throw it to those outside of Israel first.

Yet, the woman is not dissuaded. She falls at Jesus' feet crying out for help. Jesus, seeing her position says, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."<sup>2</sup> Our Lord is picturing a family gathered at mealtime around a table, eating food provided by the head of the household. Would it be right to take the Thanksgiving Day turkey with all of the fixings and rather than placing it on the table, you place it in the dog dish? No! It would be best on the table to feed your family. Here is where the Gentile woman saw herself in this picture. She was not a child in the family. She is not of Israel, eligible for the choicest morsels of food. But she saw herself as a household dog (a Gentile; the Jews often called Gentiles "dogs") eligible to receive **crumbs that might fall from the master's table**. She was not wanting to deprive Israel of God's blessings. She was simply asking that some of the blessing be extended to her in her need. If it means the healing of her daughter, she is satisfied with the crumbs that fall down as those who are a part of the family eat their meal.

In light of such **great faith** (cf. 8:10), the kind of faith Jesus was looking for in Israel, He **granted her request. Her daughter was healed ... that very hour**. This Gentile woman's faith contrasted with Israel's leaders who were rejecting Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

### **Dogs! Us?**

We can very easily identify with our Lord's illustration. Every single one of us is a dog. All of us are outside Israel. None of us are native Israelites, children belonging to the promises and covenants. We deserve nothing from God because of this, not to mention our many great and grievous sins against Him. Yet, He deigns to give us crumbs of His mercy, indeed more than

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<sup>1</sup> Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 56). Victor Books.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Mt 15:26). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>3</sup> Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 56). Victor Books.

crumbs. We cry out to Him for help, for mercy, for grace. It is a part of the beginning of every service. We confess our sins to our heavenly Father. Our heavenly Father has mercy upon us and forgives us every single one of our sins. Not because of anything we have done but purely by His grace. Grace shown in Jesus Christ, that He does heal this woman's daughter from that very hour. Then, as the Son of David, He goes to the cross to die. Not only for Israel but for all the world. Israel denied him, but he did not deny Israel. He dies that both Israel and Gentile may be reconciled to God forever. That the whole world may have the forgiveness of their sins.

### **More than Crumbs, Family!**

That forgiveness He gives to you in the waters of Holy Baptism. There God claims you as His very own child. He places His very name upon you. You may not be a physical part of Israel, but you are a part of the spiritual Israel as the Father grafts you onto the true Vine, His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. To you are given more than crumbs. From his bread he fed both the children and the "little dogs"<sup>4</sup> He feeds us with His very Body and Blood, in with, and under, the bread and the wine for our salvation. The least of Christ is precious to a believer, even the very crumbs of the Bread of life.<sup>5</sup> Christ lifts you up to sit, not under the table, but at the table as His beloved sons as members of His holy family. He feeds you with the very bread of life for your eternal salvation. He gives you, an outsider, everything that you need for this body and life unto life everlasting!

Thanks be to God, that He does have mercy and grace upon even those outside of Israel, extended to the entirety of the world, even to our present day and beyond.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard, and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Stagg, F. (1969). [Matthew](#). In C. J. Allen (Ed.), *Matthew–Mark* (p. 169). Broadman Press.

<sup>5</sup> Henry, M., & Scott, T. (1997). [Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary](#) (Mt 15:21). Logos Research Systems.