

February 10

Scriptures: Read Matthew 15

Key Verse: “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” (Matthew 15:28)

Overview

This is a strange story, to say the least. It's a story of a Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon-possessed, who came to Jesus crying out for mercy that her daughter might be healed. Apparently she was so insistent that the disciples became upset and urged Jesus to send her away. Jesus' response is what makes the story so difficult. He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” Now it appears that He's being uncharacteristically callous and hard. But notice that His disciples were there, and they undoubtedly remembered that He had already sent them out to the lost sheep of Israel. They knew this woman was not one of those. They knew she was a Canaanite, a Gentile, one often referred to by Jewish people as a dog. And Perhaps in order to appear consistent to His disciples, He said what He said, but then, probably looking at the woman with tongue in cheek, as it were, He said, “It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs”.

The woman, instead of being intimidated by this statement, which may have been a quotation of a popular saying, responds almost as though it is a game, saying, “Yes Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table.” There's obviously some kind of repartee going on between Jesus and this woman. There's a non-verbal communication that the disciples miss. How else does one explain her remarkable wit and self-assurance? She obviously read in Jesus' look a compassion, an empathy, an openness that she very quickly seized. Jesus used her as a tremendous object lesson saying, “Woman, you have great faith. Your request is granted,” which is reminiscent of the centurion who had greater faith than anyone in Israel. The thing that jumps out here is the fact that Jesus refused to be painted into a corner, even by His own words. He has a marvelous flexibility about Him and a kind of youthful adaptability that took as it's rule, first and foremost, the rule of love.

Prayer

Lord, You know us so well; You know exactly how to deal with us to boost our faith, trust and growth in You. May we respond to Your promptings as did the Canaanite woman.