

## **Don't Give Up!**

Matthew 15:21-28

The Second Sunday in Lent, March 17, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The work of the devil is comprehensive work. The work of the devil is to destroy all of God's creation. The devil does not have the power to destroy all of God's creation. He can attack it, but he cannot destroy it. In fact because it is God's creation the devil cannot touch the creation at all unless God permits him.

Therefore the devil attacks the ones whom God has left in charge of the creation. The devil attacks the ones who are made in the image of God about whom God has said, "Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, over the beast of the field and over all the livestock, over all of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the ground." The devil attacks those people because those people have authority over the creation. If they go bad, the creation will go bad because they have authority over the creation.

Therefore the fall into sin was not merely a moral failure on our part. The eating of the forbidden fruit in the garden was not simply disobedience to a commandment. It was a tearing asunder of the orders of the creation as those who were created sought to be the One who created them. This turns the order of creation upside down. By turning the creation upside down the creation was torn asunder. The only thing that kept the creation from dissolving back into its primordial chaos from which God called it was the grace of God. And so when we ate of the forbidden fruit the planets did not leave their courses, the sun did not explode, the natural forces of the creation continued in force. But they were changed. They were changed.

By turning the order of creation upside down the ones who were made in the image of God introduced death into the creation. By introducing death into the creation we introduced decay into it. In other words by introducing death into the creation we have introduced into the creation those things which lead to death. So while the creation is still here and it still operates in an orderly fashion it is beset by decay and death.

There are fires that kill. There are tornadoes, mudslides, and hurricanes that take life and property. There are floods and plagues all over the world. There are diseases for which there is no cure. There is murder and bloodshed and warfare. There is the sudden death of those that we love, even those who are very young. There is old age and death.

The devil convinced us to do this and we went along with him. We continue to go along with him with every sin that we commit. We are engaged in it. So all of the decay and all of the sickness and all of the tragedy and all of the death and all of the grief is the devil's work along with the sin and evil and depravity that is in us and in others.

It is against the devil's work then that we pray.

I have found Immanuel Lutheran Church to be more like the Canaanite woman than like the disciples. The disciples seem lost in this whole episode. They tell Jesus to send the woman away. They point out to Jesus that she is crying out after them. The apostles do not record why the disciples asked the Lord to send the woman away. Perhaps they were embarrassed. Perhaps something else. What the apostles do record is that the Lord did not send the woman away.

The disciples witnessed the feeding of the five thousand. And yet in spite of the fact that they witnessed the feeding of the five thousand, when the Lord is in the wilderness shortly after this with another crowd this time of four thousand, even though there is less people, the disciples still don't know where to find food for such a great crowd of people.

The woman is not like the disciples. In spite of the fact that she is a Canaanite woman who has lived under God's curse since the days of Noah, she knows that Jesus is the Lord. She knows that Jesus is the incarnate God who has come to restore the creation from the devil's attack.

The woman knows that the Lord is the Son of David. She knows that He is here to keep God's righteous laws and commandments. She knows that He is here to establish the everlasting kingdom of Israel. Like Rahab and Ruth before her she wants a part of Israel's God and a place in Israel's kingdom.

If the curse given to her and her people by Noah is to be lifted by anyone it shall be lifted by the incarnate God who is the Son of David come to establish the everlasting kingdom of Israel.

And now the curse is manifest in her life. Her daughter is demon possessed. In today's day and age it is hard to understand what the apostles meant by demon possession. Movies have made demon possession into something dramatic and filled with supernatural activity. But if the devil's work is all around us in the decay and evil in the world then while her daughter may have been suffering dramatically from demon possession as we think of it, and certainly our Lord did encounter such demon possessed people where the demon uses the person's voice to hold conversation with Him, the girl could simply be ill with a disease that leads to death. There were also

people who were demon possessed who were brought to Jesus who were blind and mute. The only affect that the demon had on them was that he made his victim blind and mute. As soon as the demon was cast out the person spoke and saw. All decay, all sin, and all death are a work of the devil and the Lord, the Son of David, has come to destroy the devil's works.

The Canaanite woman knows this and so she prays.

My experience of Immanuel Lutheran Church is that you are more like the Canaanite woman than you are like the disciples. You pray. When you sin you pray and ask God to cast the sin out from you. When you are sick you pray and ask the Lord to heal you. When you are dying you pray and ask the Son of David to forgive all of your sins and prepare you for the resurrection of the dead.

And sometimes when you pray, you get an immediate answer. I have prayed in hospital rooms and the Lord sent His answer while I was still there praying with whomever it was with whom I was praying. I have prayed with those who are dying and their last hour was a blessed one.

And sometimes when you pray you do not get an answer. The Lord does not answer you a word. You pray for healing and it does not come. You pray that the Lord would take a certain sin and vice out of your life and it remains and you continue to struggle against it like a thorn in the flesh. You pray that the Lord would prepare you for death and you still fear it and are terrified of the judgment.

Do not give up.

The Canaanite woman prayed to the Lord that the Lord would heal her daughter. The Lord did not answer her a word, but the Lord did not send her away either. So for now the Lord has not answered you a word. Do not stop praying. Just because the Lord has not answered you a word does not mean that you should stop praying or that He does not hear you. The Canaanite woman didn't stop. In fact she cried out to the Lord so much that the disciples asked Him to send her away.

Do not give up.

Do not stop praying even when it seems useless. Do not stop praying even when your conscience and your heart testify to you that you are not getting an answer. Even when circumstances around you indicate that you are not getting answer. Do not allow those circumstances to tell you that the Lord is sending you away. And definitely do not allow other people to tell you that it useless to pray. Like the disciples who tried to send the woman away there will be people and circumstances and even your own conscience who will try to send you away from the Lord. Do not go away from Him. Even in the

face of death continue to pray to Him for when you pray to the Son of David, you are praying to the One who rose from the dead and you are praying to the One who raises the dead. If He can raise the dead, He can and will overthrow the devil's work no matter what form the devil's work may take.

Do not give up even if the face of your own sin.

The Lord told the woman that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Lord told the woman it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. What He meant was that it was not right to take the blessing that the Son of David was here to give unto Israel and to throw it to a God cursed Canaanite.

In spite of the Lord's harsh words, He still had not sent her away. He still had not dismissed her. In spite of the fact that the Lord was honest with her about her situation before the God of Israel, he still left the door of mercy open to her. She took advantage of it and the work of the devil was overthrown.

Do not give up because of the curse of God that is upon you. Many of the older members of the congregation are aware of the curse that they have because of the sins they committed in their youth. Even you young people are slowly becoming aware of the full extent of the curse that your sins inflict upon you. And even in your youth your sins inform you of their full pain. The devil made out as if they would be fun and in the end they turned into bitter pain.

And when you pray to the holy God you are praying to the One from whom you can hide nothing. You are praying to the One before whom all hearts are bare and exposed. You are praying to the One who is not afraid to curse you and allow you to feel the full extent of your evil.

Keep praying to Him. In spite of your sins He has not sent you away. In spite of the fact that the earth is cursed because of you and because the earth is cursed you are cursed, the Lord has still left the door of mercy open to you.

Pray until you get the answer. Then the devil's work is overthrown.

If you are going to talk about faith, this is how you should talk about it. While faith is only God's work because only God could have given such wisdom to the Canaanite woman, nevertheless the faith that God creates is lively and active. It endures and hopes without end and no matter what the circumstances it prays.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.