

*21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." 23 But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26 He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.*

She was a woman who didn't know her place. That's why I wanted to get rid of her. She was pushy - she was loud - she wasn't one of us. Let her own people help her. We will take care of our own.

I told her to go away. "I can't help you. We're just going through your neighborhood; don't hold out your hand to us."

But she kept pounding on the windows and shouting - wouldn't leave us alone.

Now understand: I help a lot of people. But they have to have the right attitude: not pushy, demanding, but humble, begging.

You've seen those people who demand help as if it is their right. Just because I've got something they want. Let them get a job, I work for what I have.

Or those women who are so pushy about their rights. If they would only learn to ask instead of demanding, we men would treat them well. We open doors for them. Who are they to criticize us?

She was one of them. She should have been home caring for her daughter. Instead she was following us that day. Shouting and shouting. "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

Our master Jesus, ignored her. We who follow him didn't think silence was the best way to deal with her. We asked Jesus to send her away; we were weary of her shouting. Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

She was a Canaanite woman - from the very beginning they have been our enemies. Idol worshippers, pagans, they don't keep our law, they don't know our God. The Messiah is for the Jews; that's what Jesus was saying - he was sent for God's chosen people.

But she would not take "no" for an answer.

She came right up to Jesus - knelt down before him and said, "Lord help me."

O, Jesus got her then. "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." That's what he said.

And that's what she is, a Gentile dog.

Still she would not go away.

"Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Somehow her word changed Jesus' whole direction. He said to her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish. "

Her daughter was healed instantly.

Since that day this story has been repeated so many times. We followers of Jesus want to keep his blessings for ourselves - for men only, or adults only, or white people only. And others raise a racket. They say Jesus belongs to black people, and to South Americans, to women and children. They demand the good gifts of God, they shout for their rights, and God's people are changed.

Like Jesus was changed that day.

For it was not a dog that Jesus healed, nor a crumb that he offered, but in love he gave a new spirit to that girl to drive out the evil spirit. She became a person for him, a child of God, and he could not turn away.

I ask you: If that woman who holds a starving child is a person to you, can you turn your back? If you recognize the same feelings in her that are in your heart, can you ignore her pleas?

If that secretary in your office is a person to you, can you still think it all right to pay her the least possible?

If that teenager who waits on you at McDonalds is a person to you, will you still be discourteous?

Jesus and his disciples were far from home. They were in a place where they thought they were free from needy people.

But a persistent woman taught them that in life we are never on vacation from loving and caring and helping.

They thought she was beyond the boundaries of the cared for people, but on that day they learned that no one is beyond the boundary of the cared for people.

This past year the adult Bible class read the Gospel According To Mark. As we read we made a most disconcerting discovery. Often Jesus tried to get away from people. But they pursued him. Though tired, exhausted, he had compassion on them and gave what they needed.

Jesus learned the cost of love in his living. Most of all he learned the cost of love in his dying. But never did he turn his back on love because the cost was too high.

Whatever else we are called to together here, we are called to be like our Lord in this way: to never turn our back on love because the cost is too high.

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