



# ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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The Second Sunday in Lent, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son  
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

Today's Gospel passage illustrates the everlasting mercy of Christ to all who seek him earnestly. Jesus has "departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon just prior to His passion and death, and He is approached by a Canaanite woman whose ethnic background would be repulsive to a faithful Jew of the time in Galilee. Furthermore, she makes a request of the stranger: that He delivers her daughter from demonic possession. This mother seems desperate and The Apostles are annoyed at the woman's insistence. At first glance, Jesus appears indifferent and ignores her. But that doesn't deter her.

That Jesus was moved with compassion for this troubled woman there is no doubt. There were, however, obstacles. She was Gentile and a Canaanite (Phoenician). The Lord proclaims, it would seem to this woman, that He has been sent to the children of *Israel* and it is unseemly to take the children's bread and throw it "to the dogs." But even if the disciples don't recognize it, he is actually rebuking them. This poor woman was not at all deterred by the Lord's

apparent harshness: "Truth, Lord, yet even dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." This was an implicit act of faith. It was an assent to Christ's power as a healer and sovereign over all. What began as banter between strangers and sworn rivals, where she addressed Jesus as *Son of David*, ended in an exchange of tender hearts wherein she addressed Him as *Lord*.

One of the most important lessons in the passage from St. Matthew is the persistence of this mother. Her daughter's soul is at stake. Imagine this frantic mother – faced with the impending and painful loss of her child. Nothing could stop her in her quest to bring wellness to her child and to snatch her little girl from the destructive power of Satan. It was that single-mindedness, that drove her to seek out this rabbi from Israel. He, perhaps, was her last and only chance.

What does this mean for us in this Lenten season? Sometimes we don't always get it right when we pray; thus Jesus' instruction to be persistent in praying—keep asking, don't stop searching, continue with your knocking. In fact, ultimately what is most

important for us is not necessarily that we receive what we ask for (sometimes the answer is NO!) or find what we search for (it may well be something entirely different that we need), or walk through the door we're knocking on (another may well open). But rather, what is ultimately most important is that we, like this terrified mother, discover a closeness with the Lord by persisting in our prayer and seeking Jesus Christ.

We must come to realize that it's about our relationship with Christ and valuing that relationship more than anything in the world. Prayer is being known by and knowing our God of love as our Father, our Messiah and our Holy Spirit. In the true spirit of prayer, we not only commune with God the Creator; we also bear our deepest secrets to Jesus our Lord and Saviour; and we are graced with the presence of the Holy Spirit who rightly convicts us of sin and at the same time reassures us of the promise that we are forgiven. With this gift of closeness to God through constant prayer God gives us the spiritual succour we need when we're lonely or rejected; or the state of joy by simply being alive; or the courage required to face a situation of conflict be it anywhere in our lives. It is by fervent prayer that we come to see our wealth is not in

what we do, or have; rather, it is in what we already have been given: our Salvation.

We must never stop praying! God has made the first move towards us in unbridled love, by assuming our nature and dying on the cross for us, and rising again. He is there, waiting for us to seek him out.

This scared mother kept after Christ. She ignored the disciples advice to leave Jesus alone, to leave them alone. Her persistence became her act of belief in the Son of God. She had no guarantee that her efforts would produce the desired end. It didn't matter. There was a little girl at home whose very survival was linked to the ability the mother had to seek out the Christ and beg his healing.

So it is with us. With our own multitude of prayerful requests, some acute, others less important, we must persist. God is never deaf. God does not ignore his children. God answers us in His wisdom, and in his time, and gives us what we need. When troubled or even discouraged, we must remember the parable of the Canaanite woman – her persistence brought her into intimate union with the Christ. May the persistence of our prayers keep us always by His side. Amen.

***To the Only Wise God, Our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, Both Now and Forever. AMEN.***