

Koinonia Year One—February
Content from *Growing Faithful*
Scripture from the NRSV Bible

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Seventeenth Sunday of Matthew

(Canaanite Woman)

2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1 Matthew 15:21-28

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

HEAR the Word of God—

2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

16What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, 18and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 7:1Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

It is helpful to know before reading the Gospel passage that the Canaanites were old enemies of the Jews.

Matthew 15:21-28

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

SHARE thoughts and insights—

- Faith...
- What is faith?
- When is it easy to have faith?
- When is it hard to have faith?

- How do you think the Canaanite woman who came to Jesus felt?
 - When have you felt this way? What was it like?

- When you are desperate, to whom do you go for help?

- How often do you think to ask Jesus to help you? He assures us of his help in John 14:13-14, saying, *"I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."*

- Persistence...
 - Talk about the meaning of the expression "persistence pays." How does this expression apply to this Gospel reading?
 - Where might you need more persistence in your life? Jesus says in Matthew 7:7-8...*"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."*

- How do you think Jesus would have responded to the Canaanite woman if her request had been selfish? Why?

- Great faith...
 - Think of someone you know who has great faith. What is the person like?
 - How do you recognize people of great faith?
 - How does their faith show in their lives?

- In what ways does your faith show in your life?

GROW in faith—

From God's perspective faith is an empowerment by the Holy Spirit. God sees our hearts and knows which way our free will inclines. As we exercise the gift of faith, however feeble our resolve may be, God honors our sincere decision, He lifts up our faith, strengthens, sanctifies and perfects it. The warmth, joy and love of God become clearer, stronger and stronger in us. A prayer in the Liturgy refers to "the warmth of faith, full of the Holy Spirit." The possibilities are immense as long as we remain Christ-centered rather than self-centered. As we respond to God through daily prayer

and seek to serve Him joyfully in all things, God gives us through His Holy Spirit living faith, miracle faith, mountain moving faith! (Theodore Stylianopoulos, *A Year of the Lord: Liturgical Bible Studies, Volume 2: Late Fall and Winter*)

- How are you growing in faith by exercising your faith? Be encouraged to step out in faith in a very real way this week. In other words, DO something in faith and don't just think about it.

SERVE one another in love—

The Canaanite woman stepped forth in faith and made a connection with Jesus for her daughter and her need. Each one of us is called to be a connector for Christ.

- Whom do you know who needs Jesus? First bring that person to Jesus by praying for him or her. Then ask Jesus to help you help that person. Step out in faith and do something with the person. For example, you might ask the person to come with you to church and, if you are a young person, to church school, and/or invite him or her to your home. Welcome the person in some real way. Gently let the person know your care and concern—Christ's love showing through you.

PRAY—

"Have mercy on me, Lord...

Lord, help me...

Yes, Lord..."