

Catechism Lesson for Adults and Teens Sunday of the Canaanite

The Canaanite Woman

Read the Gospel Passage for this Sunday
Matthew 15:21-28

Contextual Background:

- The trip Jesus took from Jerusalem to Tyre & Sidon was about 100 miles.
- Canaanites were a mixed ethnic group that spanned out around the eastern mediterranean sea, around Egypt, Israel, and modern day Turkey & Syria. They were a semi-nomadic group also known for being merchants along the sea and rivers in that area.
- Canaanites believed in many different gods and were considered “pagan”, offering worship to gods of the storm, the sea etc. They were not mono-theistic like the Jews, but nonetheless had many interactions with the Jews as they shared the same space. It is believed that the Canaanite people practiced magic in their pagan worship.
- In the passage here, we see the woman is referenced as a “dog”. This was sometimes a derogative word Jews used for gentiles, but it also communicated the relationship pagans had with their idols, as obedient and subservient to their idols and gods.
- Jesus does not look to insult the woman. Jesus at first poses an austere rhetorical question to her, not only testing her faith but also to show the austerity of the Pharisees he had just interacted with. Jesus is also looking to see if this woman will leave her hope in her idols, to see if she will serve the one true God instead.
- The woman shows great humility before Christ, which makes her greater than the Pharisaical Jews Jesus had just spoken to earlier in the chapter.

Discussion Questions:

1. For what thing/reason would you walk 100 miles and why?

2. Imagine you were the woman in this story, going to Jesus for healing for your family member. After Jesus answered you saying “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs”, how might you respond?
 - a. Leave angrily
 - b. Argue with Jesus
 - c. Go to the disciples for help instead
 - d. Break down and cry
 - e. Double down and ask for the smallest gift/favor that He could give

3. When you deal with needy people or outsiders, are you more like the disciples or like Jesus? Why?

4. When was a time you felt so desperate to receive God's help?

5. How has God "gone a long distance" to reach you and help you?

6. When was a time you felt God didn't answer a prayer?
 - a. How did you feel or what did you think?
 - b. Do you feel or think God answered it differently and how might that have been?

7. What was a time you have felt humbled?
 - a. How did you feel?
 - b. What did you do?
 - c. What should humility look like?