

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

August 13 - August 19

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Have you ever seen in a movie, at a friend's house, or in your own home, a dog sitting near the dinner table waiting for a crumb to fall? To the dog, even a single crumb can seem like the juiciest, tastiest morsel of steak. That image is one reason the scene in Matthew 15:21-28 is so fascinating in our Gospel passage this week.

Jesus has just arrived in Tyre and Sidon when an unnamed Canaanite woman cries out to him for mercy, interceding for her daughter. We get the impression that she has been the caregiver to this "tormented by a demon" daughter for quite some time. Verse 23 notes, "He did not answer her at all," indicating that Jesus completely ignores her.

Does that surprise you? It shocks me. I'm used to Jesus responding with kindness, compassion, sensitivity, and attentiveness to needs, not with a total disregard for this woman's situation. In the meantime, the disciples are annoyed with her and urge Jesus to send her away. He responds by saying, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v. 24), which seems to emphasize how far outside the sphere of help she is.

The story, as told in Mark 7:24-30, offers a bit more detail: "The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia" (Greek can be interpreted as a Gentile, not Jewish, and Syria is modern Lebanon). In other words: "You're not one of us." She has nothing in common with Jesus. Her culture, language, and religion are different, and her social status is most likely that of a nobody in her community. She is standing in the presence of someone who can do something about her dire situation. And referring to him as the Son of David reveals that she has some indication of Jesus being the Messiah and has heard stories of him healing the blind, the sick, the deaf, and those dealing with evil spirits.

After this exchange, most people would walk away frustrated, humiliated, or exasperated, but she moves closer to Jesus, kneels in humility, shows courage and faith, and says, "Lord, help me" (Mt 15:25).

Surely Jesus' compassion will kick in now, but it does not. He responds, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs (v. 26). Is he rebuking her, testing her, or inviting her to dig deeper in her faith journey?



She chooses depth in her reply, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” In our situation, the crumb will have the taste, feel, and strength of the tastiest morsel of steak. From her line of sight, it does not matter who she is, where she comes from, or what she is known for.

What matters is who Jesus is and his unmatched ability to heal her daughter. And he does. “Then Jesus answered her, ‘Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’ And her daughter was healed from that moment” (v. 28). Instantaneous healing.

What if she had given up? What if she had walked away? What if she had not stayed on a trajectory toward Jesus, engaging in challenging conversation with him? She would have left hopeless and her daughter would have remained unhealed. But she persevered. She believed. And she witnessed the power of Jesus as he healed her daughter without even seeing her. The presence of Jesus was felt from a distance.

FOR reflection

What trajectory are you on with Jesus? One of frustration, humiliation, or exasperation? Or are you moving closer, kneeling in humility, showing courage and faith, and saying, “Lord, help me” (Mt 15:25)?

Psalm 22:19 says, “But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.” Move closer to Jesus. Kneel. Have courage and faith. Ask for his help.





SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday	Psalm 133; Genesis 41:14-36; Revelation 15:1-4
Friday	Psalm 133; Genesis 41:37-57; Acts 14:19-28
Saturday	Psalm 133; Genesis 42:1-28; Matthew 14:34-36
Sunday	Psalm 133; Genesis 45:1-15; Isaiah 56:1, 6-8; Psalm 67; Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15:10-28
Monday	Psalm 130; Genesis 43:1-34; Acts 15:1-21
Tuesday	Psalm 130; Genesis 44:1-34; Romans 11:13-29
Wednesday	Psalm 130; Genesis 45:16-28; Matthew 8:1-13

Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

The Morning Liturgy

Opening Scripture

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:23

Opening Prayer *(based on Psalm 51)*

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

Scripture Reading *(read Psalm and Gospel text here)*

Period of Silence

Confessing Our Faith *(Apostles' Creed)*

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect *(Proper 15)*

*Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of this redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.**

A Midday Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. *Amen.*

An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen.*

A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. *Amen.*

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.





Image: The Baptism of The Holy Spirit | Artist: Rebecca Brogan | www.jtbarts.com