



If you want to get into the Olympic competition, you'd better be a pretty good athlete. If you want to get into the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, you need excellent musical ability and training. If you want to get into the Miss America Pageant, you'll be greatly helped if you are good-looking and somewhat talented. But to get into the Kingdom of God, all you need is Faith – to say, “Lord, I believe,” and to say this, not in words alone, but also in action, expressing Faith through life. The Canaanite woman in the Gospel story believed.

In the Gospel Jesus demonstrates that salvation was meant for the Jews and as well as Gentiles by healing the daughter of a Canaanite woman as a reward for her strong Faith. We should not be surprised at the apparent harshness of Jesus towards the woman. Jesus started by not answering a single word to her pleading. A merciful and compassionate man, who always had compassion for the crowd, seems not to care about her, it's like saying; it's none of my business, leave me alone. The greatness of this woman's Faith consists in her willingness to cross the barrier of racism. She is a pagan and yet, she was calling him “Son of David”, a title that she had heard the Jews using for the savior of the world to come. Jesus said to her, “It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.” At first sight, we feel shocked that Jesus should at all use the word ‘dogs’, the term Jews used for the non-Jews. Jesus did not offend her but told the truth how Jews viewed a non-Jew. The Canaanites were the ancestral enemies of the Jews and were regarded as pagans, idolaters and unclean. She, on the other hand is not offended and put off by the remark but with conviction replied, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” Her humility is in admitting that she did not deserve the master's attention and time but she is convinced that even if dogs do not get to sit at the master's table, they can always enjoy the intimacy with the master by sitting at the feet of the master. Jesus answered her, “Woman great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” The woman got more than she had hoped for. She had come with one request but she received two blessings instead; her daughter was released from demonic possession, received a new life and she herself found a new life as well because of her encounter with Jesus. Jesus here demonstrated that his mission is to break down the barriers and to remove the long-standing walls of division and mutual prejudice between the Jews and the Gentiles.

God does not discriminate but welcomes all who believe in Him, who ask for His mercy and who try to do His will. Faith in God that brings salvation to people; to belong to this or that nation counts for nothing in order to be saved. None of us has in oneself the power to obtain salvation and no one can claim any right to be saved. Only God can save us and He longs to do it. We must not block God's effort to save us. Jesus shows us that we are saved because of God's mercy and love. God's mercy and love are extended to all who call on Him in Faith and trust, no matter who they are. God's care extends beyond the boundaries of race and nation to the hearts of all who live their Faith in word and in action, expressing Faith through life.

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