

September 2023

Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



Noteworthy

Upcoming Events

LLC Ministers & Wives Camp
Stony Lake Camp
September 22–24, 2023

SLC Bible Course
*Palm Sunday to Pentecost—From
the Old Testament to the New*
Stony Lake Camp
October 6–9, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar/
Seminar #4
The Minister as Counselor
October 21, 2023
8:30 am–12:30 pm CDT

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #5
November 2, 2023
8:00 pm CST

“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” That’s the theme for the Bible course scheduled for October 6–8, 2023 at Stony Lake Camp. The course will focus on the period from Palm Sunday to Pentecost.

At the moment, enrollment numbers are low. It’s possible the course will be canceled due to lack of interest. If you are interested in attending the course, either in person or online, please sign up during the next week. You can do so at www.llchurch.org under the events tab.

As we noted in July, we will have an LLC Ministers Webinar/Seminar on October 21st. The event will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the LLC office. The event will end around 12:30 p.m. with lunch. The seminar will also be live-streamed on Zoom for those that would like to join remotely. Our brother Matti Kontkanen, former long-time pastor for the Phoenix and Prescott Valley congregations, will be the presenter. Matti now works as a counselor and has extensive counseling experience. He will give two presentations that touch on pastoral counseling. The first will deal with listening and the second with love and respect.

Please sign by October 13th. You can sign up to attend in-person or online using this link <https://forms.gle/fYqrFNkZEBSEkS6f8>.

We warmly invite you to participate.

JESUS AND THE CANAANITE WOMAN

Leo Väyrynen

Matt. 15:21-28

We are distressed when a person near and dear to us becomes seriously ill. We seek for help from everywhere and our distress increases if we don't get it. We pray to God. But if even God doesn't seem to hear, hopelessness overwhelms our minds. Our dear one's sufferings are hard to watch. If he or she dies, it feels like falling into a dark well.

Our text relates of a mother whose child was seriously ill. The mother lived in Phoenicia in the area of Tyre and Sidon, in the area of present-day Lebanon. She wasn't a Jew, rather she was a Canaanite. She had heard of Jesus and His miracles. When Jesus comes to that area, the mother shouts, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." It is amazing that this gentile woman believes upon Jesus and recognizes Him as the Messiah foretold by Jewish prophets.

What does Jesus do? He does not answer the woman at all. Jesus explains to His disciples that He was not sent for the Gentiles, but to



JESUS CONVERSES

Jesus met many people during His life. Several of them wanted to converse with Him. Jesus' teaching gave birth to questions in some listeners. They wanted to hear more since His teachings deviated from the teachings of the scribes of that time. Several people approached Jesus because of their difficulties and problems. Jesus also used to talk on His own initiative with people He encountered in various situations.

Several discussions which Jesus had with various people are recorded in the Bible. This year we will publish a series of writings in this paper by Leo Väyrynen on some of these discussions. Although around two thousand years have passed since these discussions, their topics and issues are still timely. We notice this in this series of writings.

gather the lost sheep of Israel (Ezekiel 34). The woman is not discouraged. She throws herself down to the ground at Jesus' feet and renews her request for help. Jesus answers her in a seemingly blunt way, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

Doesn't Jesus seem like a racist here, a practitioner of racial oppression? The Jews disparagingly called non-Jews dogs, which they considered to be unclean animals. According to Jesus' answer, God's grace didn't belong to Gentile dogs. Even this does not depress the woman. She knows that there is one room in a poor Canaanite dwelling and one table in the room, under which the family dog lives. This dog eats those crumbs that eating children drop under the table.

Jesus Converses

The woman does not try to put herself in the position of the children of Israel. She does not demand a place at the table belonging to the children but admits that she is the dog Jesus called her. At the same time, she demands the dog's right to eat the crumbs that fall to the floor. The woman is prepared for the lot of a dog if only her dear child would receive help.

Behold the woman's faith! She is humble in her faith, but at the same time persistent and steadfast. Now Jesus gives in. He says, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." A miracle happens: at that moment the woman's daughter becomes well.



Why did Jesus first brush off the woman and then consent to her anyway? Jesus especially focused His activities on the Jews. Only after His resurrection did He send His followers into the entire world. Only then did the Gentile's time of visitation begin. This happening was nonetheless preparing the disciples for the time when the gospel would be proclaimed to all people.



On the other hand, Jesus tried the woman's faith. The Gentile woman's faith proved to be more lasting than the faith of the Jews. This was not the only time that Jesus noticed this (See Matt. 8:5-13).

As for the core message of our text, it's not in the miracle of healing, but rather in faith. The Canaanite woman of the story had unrelenting faith. Faith is trust, which hopes even when there doesn't seem to be any hope to be found. Faith is like a child, who clings to his mother's skirt hem and won't let go until his mother takes him into her lap and helps him. Such trust each one of us should show towards God.

The example of the Canaanite woman encourages us also to call for help in all

distress. It isn't wrong for us to rely on doctors or other professional helpers, but even then we should call for help from God. God willingly hears our request for help. We should call on God for help even when it seems that He does not hear us. Jesus tried the woman in our text. In the same way, we can be tried. When we call for help, help may be slow in coming. Ultimately however God answers, and often in a way which is better than we would even have been able to expect.

What kind of faith do you have, dear reader? Has your faith felt strong in every situation, or have you often found yourself lamenting that your faith is so little? You have prayed, "Lord, increase my faith!" You have been distressed over your little faith and like a puppy you have waited that even one crumb would fall from the grace table which would refresh your hungering heart

and remove all of your doubts.

We have a God who hears prayers. He approaches us through the gospel of His kingdom and assures us that we have permission to believe all sins and doubts forgiven. This word of grace strengthens our faith in God's love and good guidance. Many of us have personal experiences of this.

The Canaanite received help; her child became well. But what then if our child, regardless of our most earnest prayers still dies? Even then we don't need to fall into darkness and hopelessness. What has happened to the daughter in our text, to her mother, and to all of the people whom Jesus healed? They all have died. But they who received saving faith in Christ will live eternally. With weak faith, we will one day gain much.

Epistle Postil

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Hannu Heinänen

GOD'S CARE

Jesus comforted the anxious. He taught that a Christian does not need to worry over all possible matters. The Heavenly Father helps with the most essential thing, finding God's kingdom and His righteousness. Thus, God frees the Christian to do good to his neighbors. Sunday's theme is a necessary reminder to human beings, who are prone to selfishness. The Bible teaches that it is more blessed to give than receive.

Of the day's epistle texts, the Letter to the Galatians focuses on the shadows of life. According to it, life's adversities contain God's guidance, protection, and care. Behind them is God's love for people. The other texts speak of wealth and its use. The Philippians considered God's work to be precious and wanted to support Paul financially.

Paul wanted to show the Ephesians through his own example that temporal possessions were a secondary matter to him. Living faith based on God's Word gives strength to help one's needy neighbor. Timothy was given the duty to teach that being satisfied with a modest living protects many from the dangers of wealth.

YEAR 2

Philippians 4:10-14

THANKS FOR GIFTS

The Letter to the Philippians could be characterized in many ways. The letter is known as a letter of joy, which encourages one to rejoice especially in Christ. The heartfelt tone of the letter tells of the close relationship between Paul and the Philippian congregation.

A SERVING MIND

Paul had been the object of the Philippian Christians' care. Paul had received monetary gifts from them for the work of the gospel when he was in Thessalonica and other places (Phil. 4:15). Having heard that Paul had been imprisoned again, the Philippians sent Epaphroditus from their midst to take gifts and help to the apostle. On his return trip, this co-worker of Paul received a letter in which Paul thanked the Christians for their kindness towards him.

The Philippian congregation had been active in their assistance for his work. They had helped Paul and his work in other areas three or four times. Now through the gift that they had sent, the Philippians expressed their love, which had made the congregation one of the most faithful supporters of the apostle's work.

Living faith begets love, thankfulness, and obedience of faith in the heart. That's why a Christian wants to help people in difficulties, for example. The assistance

makes the helper feel good. It creates a humble and thankful attitude in the heart of the recipient.

FOR THE SAKE OF MUTUAL LOVE

Paul's thanking for the monetary gift he received apparently wasn't an easy thing to do. He was an exception to the norm that a proclaimer of the gospel was entitled to receive his living from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14). Paul was used to supporting himself by making tents. This income had been enough to feed his co-workers as well.

To make his decision, the apostle placed himself in the position of the Philippians. Refusing help could have jeopardized the close relationship between Paul and the Philippian congregation. Paul felt a need to justify his unusual willingness to accept aid. During his work, he had experienced very varied situations. Paul trusted that God would ultimately take good care of him and direct the gospel work according to His will.

GOD GUIDES AND BLESSES

God's handprint is seen in the fate of the world and its nations as well as in the phases of individual lives. The human mind sees God's guidance and blessing only in connection with success and well-being. That's why many people think life's adversities are a result of bad luck.

According to the Bible, God is close also in the shadows of life: in trials, poverty, and deprivation. Remembering this amid difficulties is a comforting experience for a Christian.

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