

“The Merciful Son of David”

One of the greatest afflictions of our day is loneliness. Increasingly people feel isolated, cut off, forsaken. We can blame some of this on COVID which put all kinds of barriers in the way – but there is more to blame than the pandemic.

The irony of social media is that it fuels this isolation and loneliness. With immediate communication always at our fingertips – face to face and flesh to flesh interactions decline and even become the source of anxiety.

Behind all of this is the devil. What God creates to be together he tries to separate – husbands and wives, parents and children. Husband and wife are separated even when remaining in the same house. Children, not listening to what their parents tell them, also drives a wedge.

The result of the devil’s sly work leaves people hurting, wounded, angry, separated and lonely. His work often leads to delusion, and despair.

Delusion. We don’t like the way things shake out and we become angry – angry with God. “I’ll do it myself” – “I’ll do things my way” – which is to say, “I will be God.”

Despair. In the confusion and loneliness of our lives we are led to the ultimate despair – that there is no God – and if there is, either He doesn’t have a clue what’s going on in my life, or He doesn’t care. Or, there is no way God can love someone like me. That, folks, is the devil’s goal – to separate you from God, eternally.

As you can see, the devil is very good at what he does – as seen by so many who have no use for Christ and His Church. Some are deluded into believing that the Church is nothing more than a man-made institution – and just like everything else the Lord has instituted – the lie being peddled by the devil is that it is bad, and evil.

This is nothing more than a denial and separation from God – and man is then tempted to fill that void with himself. There are many who claim to be “spiritual” and who readily confess that “I believe” – and yet, will not have anything to do with God, His Christ, His redeeming blood, His Church – His salvation.

Many, and maybe you, have been lied to and live in despair – believing that God is not “for me.” “I’m divorced – had an abortion – am attracted to the same sex- or have harmed someone that God has entrusted to my care.” “There is no way God can love me, forgive me.” You live as an outcast. Alone.

Dearly beloved, listen to God – listen to the Word He speaks to you this day. Don’t shut your ears, or reject what He says – because that will only leave you deluded and in despair.

The Lord sets before you today a Canaanite woman. The Canaanites were pagan idolaters. The region of Tyre and Sidon were notorious for their wickedness, avowed enemies of God’s people. And yet, this woman is not afraid to come face to face with Jesus and His disciples. She is in need. Her daughter is “oppressed by a demon.”

She could easily have concluded that they wouldn’t listen to a woman – to a Canaanite. “We are not God’s people – He doesn’t care about me.” Instead, she believes that Jesus is the “Son of David” – He is the promised Savior – her Savior, who is her “Lord” – One who is merciful, whose mercy is for her and her daughter.

Be honest, does Jesus appear to be merciful to her? Not at first, right? Her begging for mercy is met with His silence. His disciples want to send her away – “don’t bother us.” The irony is that Jesus had given these disciples His power to cast out demons (Matt. 10:8) – but they don’t do it.

Do they believe that Jesus is not FOR this woman and her daughter? After all, Jesus had sent them to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6) – and Jesus seems to agree with them. Is she cut off from God? Is God not for her, this foreigner?

It would be easy for her, and for you, to conclude that He is not “for you.”

In spite of what the devil would have her believe, she holds firmly to the promises she has heard. “Lord, help me” is her prayer. She knows her need. She knows she is not God – that she can’t handle her daughter. They are oppressed. “I need help – and YOU are my Helper!”

“It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” Hearing such a response we would throw in the towel and give in to despair – but she answers with an amazing word YES. She confesses her unworthiness. “I am a dog.” She isn’t entitled. She doesn’t demand her “rights” – to have what I want.

Her faith confesses that Jesus is the Lord, the God of all creation – and that she is not God, that she is a sinner. Her faith boldly confesses, saying – “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” You are my Master, and you are merciful. Your crumbs are all I need. Your “grace is sufficient for me.” (2 Cor. 12:9)

Dearly beloved, do not despair. Jesus, the Son of David – was sent to Israel – and through Israel, is the Savior of all. Your sin (divorce, abortion, abuse, sinful desires, or whatever they might be) are FORGIVEN in Christ – not because of your pedigree – but because “God so loved the WORLD that He gave His only-begotten Son” – for you.

Like the Canaanite woman, you dare to come before Him today – not demanding, but begging. It is a “great faith” that confesses – You are God, and I am not. I am not worthy, but you are merciful.

In the mighty swirl of the devil’s lies – hear the Word of the Lord. “I forgive all your sins,” Jesus says to YOU. My Body and my Blood are “for you.” You are not alone – you are baptized into Christ Jesus – a beloved child of God, with brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Jesus has reconciled you to your heavenly Father – and to one another. Through His blood he re-creates you – putting your life back into God’s “very good” order – to live as He created you to live – not alone, or separated.

Look around and see your family – your brothers and sisters in Christ. You are part of “the communion of saints.” You have a Master, Jesus Christ – a Savior who loves you more than He loved His own life – who blesses you with a steadfast confidence in His loving-kindness and mercy. O Lord, have mercy on us.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.