

090521 Sermon "The Syrophenician Woman's Faith" Mark 7:24-30

At the United Methodist Church of Westville where I served previously, there was an early morning prayer meeting every day. After the prayer meeting, people gathered together at the fellowship hall to have breakfast, have a conversation, play table tennis together, and then go to work. Of course, this is the story before COVID-19. When I had a conversation with the male church members there, a topic that came up frequently was sports. Golf, tennis, table tennis, and so on...

But when we talked about it, there was something important in common to all those sports. That is, when you swing, there is an excessive amount of force loaded into it. Your shoulders, wrists, or hips may feel tight and stiff. So, posture is important for every swing. It is often said that it is because there is a lot of unnecessary power remaining when there is a strain on any part of the body. Instead, you need to relax and remove tension. In order to correct bad habits, you constantly receive lessons from the coach. Otherwise, if bad swing posture is repeated, it may become impossible to correct later.

I think the Christian life is very similar. In a sense, the life of faith also has to do with getting rid of unnecessary power. Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, "I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters, as my boasting of you—a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We get rid of the unnecessary tension that we have and receive the guidance

of the Lord. Denying yourself. why? To acknowledge Jesus in our daily life. So, not according to my network, my strength, my method, and my plan, but according to the Word of God, we reflect and self-evaluate based on the Word of God, identify the wrong parts, and fix them with the help from above. Through this process, unnecessary power is being removed and we become closer to Jesus.

In today's Gospel of Mark, the story of a mother is written. It is not a success story of a noble family of pure-blood Israeli faith. Instead, it is a story of a foreign woman who was treated less than a dog by the Israelites at that time, and who could not even speak freely. There are many stories of mothers introduced in the Bible, and among them, the faith of this Syrophenician woman really shines.

If you read the concluding part of today's Bible text in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus praises this Canaanite woman very much. He said, "Great is your faith. It will be as you wish!" What a blessing! Then, as Jesus said, from that time on, the daughter's health was restored according to the mother's wish.

However, the mother's heartache must have been great until these fruits were produced. Please read the Bible today with that mother's heart. What kind of daughter did she have? She had a little daughter had an unclean spirit. We don't know what symptoms she had, but maybe people laughed at her. But to this woman, this daughter was the most precious one in the

world! No matter what other people said.

If only this child could be healthy, this woman would have tried all the methods she could try until then. No matter how far it was, she would have been there. She must have tried everything she could. Still, it was of no use until then. Then, she heard rumors about Jesus. Rumors spread that he had special abilities! He was called a prophet, and he was told that he was a man of God. "If it were him, wouldn't he be able to make my daughter healthy?" Despite the fact that she was a Gentile woman, she went looking for Jesus. As a foreign woman at the time, she shouldn't be talking to a Jewish man.

Dear brothers and sisters, here you learn an important lesson of faith! Faith is a search for Jesus. Hoping that "Jesus can change my life" in your life's journey. However, there are always obstacles in your life. It must have been a prejudice in today's Gospel of Mark! The prejudice of being a stranger and the prejudice of being a woman. There are many prejudices in the world we live in today. But don't give up. We must believe the following words of the Bible. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

For her daughter's sake, this woman overcomes all the insults and trials that are intolerable. The woman comes to Jesus and shouts to have mercy on her, but no one answers. It must have been because she was a foreigner. But she did not give in, and this time she raised her voice even more.

The Matthew version is a little more detailed, saying, "Lord, Son of David,

have mercy on me! My daughter is terribly demon-possessed." Obviously, it was her daughter who was sick and pitiful, but this woman was not asking to have mercy on her daughter, but crying out to have mercy on her. The disciples said to Jesus. "Lord, a woman keeps shouting behind us, so let her go." This mother also overcomes this neglect.

When Jesus said, "I was not sent to any other place than the lost sheep of the house of Israel," she also overcame her inferiority complex, "No matter how hard I try, it is useless because I am a foreign woman!" For her daughter!!! However, the last test must have been very difficult to endure. Jesus didn't say anything until then, and finally opened his mouth, saying, "You cannot take the children's bread and give it to the dog." Actually, these words were not the words of Jesus, but rather reflected the thoughts of the Jews at the time.

Even after hearing these words, she said, "Dogs also eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. So, can you give me a favor for the crumbs?" In other words, "Lord, it doesn't have to be perfect grace. I'm begging you to have mercy on me, even if it's even a small crumb!"

You saw this woman's love for her daughter and her faith in the Lord. Hearing this mother's answer, Jesus praised this woman's faith and said, "Your faith is great," which is written only twice in the Gospels, and made her wish come true.

Do we not often feel that even one whole bread is lacking? But how precious is that if there is even a small piece of grace from God, I shall not be in want?

George Müller of England, who received more than 50,000 answers to his prayers, is well known for his study of the Bible in prayer in quiet morning hours. After putting on clothes in the morning, George Muller immersed himself in prayer. After such godly training, he began to experience change in his life. He said this: (Quote) "I realized that reading God's Word is the most important thing I have to do. So I meditate on the Bible, through which my mind becomes stable, courageous, cautious, and receive critique. By meditating on the Word of God, my heart also enters an experiential communion with the Lord.

After reading the Lord's precious blessing in the Bible, the first thing I did was to meditate on the Word of God and to study as if it was the source of blessing, not to preach to the public on what I have meditated on, but rather to consume the nutrition for my own soul. The result of my routine work was that a little while later my soul confessed everything to God, gave thanks, and made wishes to God. Therefore, although I began by meditating on the Word of God, I soon became devoted to prayer." (End quote)

Through today's story, I pray that God's love will be engraved in your hearts

again. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Because of that love, he did bear the despised cross for us. Do you believe this?

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, there is a saying.

"Tribulation does not exist because you did not live righteously, and the absence of tribulation does not mean that you lived righteously. Because there is God's will to be revealed through this tribulation, the tribulation is given to you. Only ask for greater faith and strength from God, who only gives us hardships that can be overcome."

Don't be discouraged by tribulation or be filled with disappointment, but remember to pray even in the midst of tribulation, completely rely on God's grace, and be humble, earnest, and persistent like a Syrophenician woman, relying on the Lord and receiving answers. I pray that unnecessary power will disappear from your life as well, and you will rather live a life filled with the power of God.

Fairfield Grace, May God's grace and peace and blessing be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.