

Matthew 15:21-28

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." 23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." 24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." 27 And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Pigs will never fly. That's common knowledge, I think. Even the most radical Darwinists probably wouldn't believe that pigs, large, fat, slow, and not particularly motivated, would be able to develop wings and take to the skies. It's a lost cause. In fact, it's so widely understood that pigs have not and never will fly that the saying has been adopted by countries around the world. When someone is trying to put a hopeful spin on an extremely unlikely scenario or a completely impossible outcome, someone else may rightly say "that'll happen when pigs fly." Meaning "it will never happen". It's a lost cause because pigs don't fly.

Unless you count Pigasus. On November 4, 1909 in Kent, England, aviation enthusiast and aristocrat Lord Claude Moore-Brabazon strapped a wicker basket to his biplane and tied a small pig named Pigasus into the basket and took him for a four mile flight from Shell Beach to Leysdown. On that day, pigs flew. I wish I could tell you that because a pig flew, lost causes everywhere suddenly all became less lost. But that's not true. Even today, everyone knows that, by and large, pigs don't fly.

Now if you were to ask a Jewish person at the time of Christ, they would tell you that the Messiah would come to earth for Gentiles when pigs flew. Gentiles were not who the Messiah was for, they weren't His problem. They would tell you that God would help a sinner when pigs flew. Sinners deserve God's wrath, not His mercy. They can't be helped. Neither of those things seemed possible. They were both lost causes. That would have been bad news for the Canaanite woman in our text for this morning, except for the fact that **JESUS LOVES A LOST CAUSE. He loves the one that's "not His problem", and He loves the one that "can't be helped"**. And so that will be our theme this morning. We pray: ***May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord. Our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.***

A little setting before we dig too far into our text this morning, we read in verse 21 *Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon*. This is an interesting place that we find Jesus and His disciples because this is a pagan land. When Joshua and the Israelites were going about their conquest of Canaan, they did not follow the Lord's command to drive all of the Canaanites out. Some who were driven out of the land which would one day be called Israel relocated to this region of Tyre and Sidon. And according to Judges 1:31, this was never rectified, and Israel suffered for disobeying God. These heathen people became a dangerous spiritual influence for Israel and lured many of God's people into their idolatrous practices.

Talk about a lost cause. These people of Tyre and Sidon were the enemies of God's people, Israel. These Canaanites were looked down on by the Jews, and they resented the invading Jews in return. If there was ever a people that did not deserve and had no use for the Messiah's teachings, surely it was these heathens. Jesus himself paints them in a negative light in Luke 10 when he says *Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.*

Jesus had withdrawn to this area to be alone and instruct His disciples. However, we learn from the parallel Gospel account in Mark 7 that it didn't work. The news of the Healer of Israel had spread even here. A Canaanite woman finds Jesus and his disciples staying at a house in this region and she desperately cries out to Him *Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.*

See, here's another strange thing. This Canaanite woman called Jesus the *Son of David*. This is a Messianic title found throughout the Gospels. It's based on the word of the Lord through the prophet Nathan, when he tells King David in 2 Samuel 7 *When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

Was she trying to pass herself off as a Jewish person? Trying to trick the Lord into thinking that she was one of God's chosen people? She was a Canaanite woman, a lost cause, and not Jesus' problem. He answered her not a word. But not because He didn't desire to help this Canaanite woman. He did not answer to test her faith in Him, because although she was not an Israelite, Jesus loves a lost cause.

Even the disciples implored Jesus to get rid of this nuisance. *Send her away, for she cries out after us.* And Jesus seems to concur with their impatience as He says, probably loud enough for this poor woman to hear, *I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

Does this mean that the Gospel is not for Gentiles today? Not at all. His earthly ministry was to be limited to Israel, but Christ said in John 12 *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.* This is not merely a New Testament idea either, which Paul makes clear in Romans 15 quoting 2 Samuel, Psalms, Deuteronomy and Isaiah which all speak of Gentiles worshiping the Lord God of Israel.

So who isn't the Gospel for then? Who shouldn't be hearing the precious promises of Holy Scripture? Who are the lost causes? Sadly, if we are being honest we recognize that we think of many people as lost causes for the Gospel. Those people who we look down on as undeserving of God's grace because they're worse sinners than us. The people who profess to believe in Buddha, or Brahma, Allah, or those who bow before the altar of science. We can't witness to them. They're a lost cause, they aren't Jesus' problem.

Or maybe you're thinking of yourself. The sinner who, no matter how hard they try, just cannot bring themselves to be obedient to God's will. The one who is supposed to be living on the narrow path but instead spends so much time on the broad path of wickedness and sin that you should be paying rent. Are you the lost cause? Have you thought to yourself, "My sins have disqualified me from God's grace. I'm not Jesus' problem anymore. I don't deserve to be."

If it is, I've got good news for you: Jesus Loves a Lost Cause. In fact, He loves lost causes so much that He died for them. Lost causes like you and me. He made us His problem. When mankind fell into sin, it would have been easy for God to shrug it off. "Not my problem." "Can't be helped." But He loved us so much despite our sin that He made our problem His own. *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

By His perfect life and innocent death, He has not only made our problem His own, He solved that problem by living His life in accordance with the perfect standard of God's Law and dying in our place so that we have been justified before God. We Gentiles, we sinners, we foreigners to God's will are now made new through baptism. By making us His problem and loving us lost causes, He has made us *a crown of glory In the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God.*

Now this Canaanite woman, when Christ said that He was not sent except to Israel did not cease to call out to Him for mercy. As we read earlier, she had a very serious, heart wrenching problem. Her daughter was possessed by a demon. We read about demon possession elsewhere in the New Testament and see just how serious and dangerous this was. Chains could not hold these people in whom demons had made their home, and they often would inflict injury to themselves and others. So what do you do if you are a mother and your child? Many people would probably say that it can't be helped. If you look at the other people who called on the Son of David for mercy, you'll find that they were blind. Another problem that there really wasn't any solution for. Another lost cause. But Jesus loves a lost cause.

As she begged and pleaded for the Lord's assistance and deliverance, Jesus, in answer, presents her with an analogy: *But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. It would be improper for Jesus to help her, since she was not in His target audience. It can't be helped.*

But she answered, Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

The Canaanite woman persisted in her pestering of the Savior because her situation was a lost cause. Her daughter was possessed by a demon and there was nothing for it, it couldn't be helped. But she didn't believe that. She believed that it could be helped, but only by Jesus. Only Jesus held the key to her daughter's recovery. Because Jesus loves a lost cause.

My dear Christian friends, we face many hardships. The things that seemingly can't be helped. And the temptation is to shrug our shoulders and resign ourselves to defeat. "It is what it is." The cancer diagnosis, the marriage on the rocks, the heavy burden of sin we try to carry ourselves. The lost causes.

What a privilege we have to, with the Canaanite woman, bring our petitions before the Lord in prayer. To bring our hopeless, impossible situations to Him and leave them in His powerful, loving hands. Jesus Himself says in Matthew 7 *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* James 4 tells us *you do not have because you do not ask.* Will His answer always be yes? Will He always solve our problems at the time and in the way that we think is best? No. He says *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.* But He assures us in Psalm 84 *No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!* Having been made righteous and upright in Christ's blood and sanctified to live God-pleasing lives, may we always trust in Him to deliver us from or carry us through every distress according to His perfect and gracious will.

I don't have to tell you, there's a lot of lost causes out there. But you know what? Pigs fly. In Christ, the impossible happens. Hopeless, sinful people are saved because Jesus Loves a Lost Cause. Though none of us should have been His problem, He made it His business to solve our impossible problem of sin with His impenetrable promise of salvation through His blood. Even though our problems seemingly "can't be helped", no problem is a match for Jesus' powerful love and compassion. A pig only very seldom finds itself at cruising altitude. But Christ's love for His redeemed is constant, and never fails. Lamentations 3:22-23 *Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.* In Jesus name, Amen.