



The Woman of Canaan at the Feet of Christ Jean-Germain Drouais (1763- 1788)

Musee du Louvre, Paris. Downloaded from <http://www.wga.hu>

As Drouais died at the tragically young age of 25 we have few examples of his work, but these few give a tantalising glimpse of what might have been. His prize-winning painting of the encounter with the Canaanite woman captures the dramatic tension of this scene. The centre comprises three figures forming a triangle of extended arms, each expressing a strong but different emotion. On one side of Jesus the kneeling Canaanite pleads with Jesus for help; on the other a spokesman for the disciples urges him to send her away. At the centre Jesus extends his right arm towards the unfortunate woman, looking away in apparent disdain. . Have the disciples convinced him to ignore her?

The reaction of the disciples is perhaps understandable: it was their way of trying to protect Jesus. When the group had moved out to the area around Tyre and Sidon, they had left Jewish territory and now expected a brief time of respite from the clamouring demands of the Jewish crowds - and safety from the increasingly hostile Jewish authorities. Now their peace was interrupted by a foreigner clamouring for attention. Instinctively the disciples had opted to ease the pressure on Jesus rather than to help someone in need.

On the face of it Jesus' initial reaction to the woman's demands is less understandable: at first he ignores her but then appears to snub her, dismissing her in words loaded with unpleasant racial overtones.

"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." (v 26)

We soon see that Jesus' intention was not to deny the healing this anxious mother sought for her daughter, but to ensure that she fully understood what she was asking for. It was a test of her faith. She passed!

"Woman, you have great faith!" (v 28)

The disciples saw the demanding woman as a problem; worse still she came from a race regarded as enemies of the Jews – people best avoided. Jesus saw a loving mother with a child in need of healing.

The disciples saw a barrier that separated Gentile from Jew and by their action reinforced it. Jesus saw the barrier but wanted the woman to recognise it so that she should overcome it.

And the woman? She saw the barrier but loved her sick daughter too dearly to let anything stand in her way.

How do **we** see people? And how do **we** react to barriers that we see around us or around others?

Silence, Prayer, And Communion Ending 9.30 a.m.

Silence

A time for thought...reflection...prayer

Prayer

The Canaanite woman loved her daughter.

Think of those we love

Heavenly Father, we thank you for loving us unconditionally, for the strength that we draw from that love and the comfort it brings in times of trouble. We thank you for the selfless love that people show in response to those in need, reflecting your divine love. And we thank you too for family love we have known, from parents, brothers or sisters, partners, or children and for the brotherly love of good friends and fellow Christians.

We pray for those who do not feel loved, for children brought up without parental love and for those who have suffered broken relationships. We pray too for those whose experience of life has left them suspicious of others and who find it difficult to make deep and meaningful relationships. And we remember the lonely and the bereaved.

Lord reach out to those who know little of human love and touch them with your transcendent fatherly love.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our pray

The Canaanite woman had faith.

Lord I believe, help my unbelief.

Heavenly Father kindle in each of us the flame of faith until it be full and unreserved, penetrating our thought and acting as the lens through which we see other people and through which we understand the world around us.. Let our faith be joyful and give peace and gladness to the spirit, shine through our words and actions and be a source of support and encouragement to others.

We pray for those who are young in faith, for those whose faith is troubled by doubt, for those whose faith has grown cold through their experience of life, and for those yet to find faith.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

The Canaanite woman showed persistence.

Think of situations where we have been frustrated or where prayers remain unanswered

Lord give us strength to overcome obstacles that prevent us from serving you and others as we should. May we not give up when the going gets tough. Help us to stick at the things we set out to do, to see them through after our initial enthusiasm has worn off and not to be distracted by a desire for novelty. May our actions be rooted in prayer, motivated by love, and completed with enthusiasm.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

The Canaanite woman sought healing.

Think of those in need of healing now

Lord we see so many needs for healing around us, healing between nations, healing of broken relationships and healing of damaged bodies or minds.

In silence we bring before you those we know who are ill or who are waiting treatment at this time.

Heavenly Father, bring your loving, healing touch to those we have named. Give them courage and patience in their distress.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

The Collect for the last Sunday (7th after Trinity), *said together*

**Generous God,
you give us gifts and make them grow:
though our faith is small as mustard seed,
make it grow to your glory
and the flourishing of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

And

Please stay for the communion even if not taking the bread and wine. You can come to the rail for a blessing (a brief prayer) – simply carry this sheet.

Communion

A moment to reflect on the times when we have not been loyal to God and His ways and have not cared for others.

In God's holy presence we call to mind our need for forgiveness.

Silence

We say together:

**Father, our sin has brought you sorrow,
has harmed those who share our life,
has been hurtful to ourselves.
We dare not say we have only lightly sinned;
Yet Christ has taken to himself the burden of it all.**

In Jesus' name may we be freed from the penalty and power of sin. **Amen.**

God of love and wonder, we sing your praises: with the great company of people, past and present, here and everywhere. We adore you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

You are indeed holy, eternal God and Father;
in love greater than we can imagine you gave your only Son,
that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

Not as we would, but as we are able,
we praise and thank you for the reality of his birth,
the glory of his humanity, the generosity of his life:
for his sacrifice on the cross,
the wonder of his resurrection, and the assurance that he lives for ever to save us;
for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for our calling to be his people,
for the hope all can find in him.

We say together:

**Remembering his life and sacrifice
we now come to his table as he has invited us to do.
Send to us now, we pray, the Holy Spirit
so that we may indeed be your people,
and that as we share the bread and wine
we may share in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Amen**

These are the gifts of God
for the people of God.

Please come to the rail now. We suggest you stand to receive communion and keep a suitable distance from fellow communicants.

Ending

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

A post-Communion prayer, said together

**Father of all,
we thank you that you have shared this feast of your kingdom with all peoples
and have united all races in your Son Jesus Christ:
may the unity we have known here
give us a joyful anticipation of the fullness of life to which you call us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen**

The blessing

Now may the blessing of God the Father,
who made from one every nation that occupies the earth;
of God the Son who bought us for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation;
and of God the Spirit who brings us together in unity,
be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The next SPACE service will be on Wednesday August 17th

The faith of a Canaanite woman

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.’

²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, ‘Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.’

²⁴ He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’

²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said.

²⁶ He replied, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.’

²⁷ ‘Yes it is, Lord,’ she said. ‘Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.’

²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Matthew 15:21-28