

*"Woman, great is your faith!
Let it be done for you as you wish."*

(Matthew 15.28)

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This meeting of Jesus with the Cananite woman stands out from among the other meetings of Jesus and his healings. She was not a Jew, but a gentile and as such looked down upon by the others. She comes to Jesus asking help for her sick daughter. *"Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon!"* (Matthew 15.22)

In those days, when an illness could not be possible to diagnose, it was referred to as diabolical possession.

She is not asking something for herself but for her daughter.

She certainly loves her and trusts that Jesus can heal her daughter.

She knows she is a foreigner, yet that doesn't stop her from turning to Jesus.

It is quite surprising that Jesus doesn't pay much attention to her. In fact, he puts her off with some harsh words. But, the woman is insistent and persistent. She is ready to even humble herself so that Jesus may heal her daughter. Her utter faith in Jesus is truly remarkable. That is what impresses Jesus so much as to complement her: *"Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish!"* (verse 28) Actually Jesus is not a monopoly of the Jews or Christians. He is the Saviour of the whole world!

What comes across out of this extraordinary event is the "faith" of the woman coupled with her courage and love. Her perseverance in prayer is an example for us and we are reminded of the words of Jesus, *"Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you."*

Her focus is Jesus as she testifies to him as God and Saviour!

Today, faith in God is a much discussed topic.

Homer, ca 800 BC wrote, *"All men need the gods."*

Plato, ca 400 BC, wrote, *"A certain portion of mankind do not believe at all in the existence of the gods."*

Blaise Pascal whose two passions were mathematics and faith, wrote of a vision that he had of Jesus that totally transformed his life. (He wrote in bursts, capturing flashes of what he thought he had seen in the vision – a vision that, by empirical

standards, could only be called fantastical.) There was not doubt in Pascal's mind, though, that it had happened, and happened in time and space, in a way his mathematically trained brain conceived of things as happening. Pascal remembered the exact time – between the hours of half past 10 and half past midnight on Monday, No. 23, 1654, (the feast day, in the Christian calendar, of Saint Clement, pope and martyr.) Jesus appeared to him; *God was real; the Christian story true*: “Certainty, certainty, heartfelt, joy, peace. God of Jesus Christ. God of Jesus Christ. *My God and your God.*”

In a collection of writings found after his death, published as “Pensees,” Pascal blended his two passions, mathematics and faith, to lay out what has come to be known as *Pascal's Wager*. It is rather simple: *It is smarter to bet that God exists, and to believe in him, because if it turns out that he is real, you win everything; if he is not, you lose nothing. So why not take the leap of faith?* (cfr Newsweek, April 9, 2007, 44,45 ff)

The crucial question is: *Do you **believe** in God? Do you “**love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, all your and your mind: and your neighbour as yourself?**” (Mt 10. 27) Christianity is not about buildings or services. It is about **the person of Jesus Christ the Son of God** who became one of us to save us and give us hope.*

The point at stake is: **“Have you discovered the truth that God loves you personally?”** (Repeat) The challenge for us is to discover once again that truth that God not only loves each of us personally, but is also **intimately and uniquely present to each of us**. That he is not a vague, indiscriminate power, but something personal and individual. God is not just the *ground of our being* in some dry, remote sort of way or just *surrounded* by God as by air, light or energy: he is, above all, a *personal* God who **knows** each of us **individually** and cares for us **uniquely**. Yet God is not just present to us, no matter how personal and immediate that may be; he is also present *within* us. (cfr., Church Times, 15 August 2008, p 15)

The real question for Christians is, “Do you **believe, really believe**, in Jesus? Do you **love, really love**, Jesus Christ?” This is what Jesus found in the Cananite woman whose daughter was healed. It is that total faith that radically transforms our Christian lives. It is not just worshipping in a particular place we like or do not like, but actually, and above all, focussing on Jesus as **your Lord and your Saviour!**

Let us pray.....

[ST Mattapally]