

Possible Prayer of the Church LENT.2 Sunday REMINISCERE March 1st 2026

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. [Possible brief silence]

Shepherd of Israel, You disdain nothing that You have made. Create in us new and contrite hearts, that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, we would receive Your absolution with true penitence. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, preserve all pastors in Christ, especially our Synod president; our circuit visitor and our pastor. Renew in this congregation and among all Your saints faith to cling to You in adversity, boldness to oppose the devil and resist the flesh, and compassion to serve one another in love. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

O LORD, our Father, You have adopted us into Your heavenly family as brothers of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Teach us, after the example of Jacob and Esau, to overcome brotherly strife in persistent prayer and with humility. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Merciful Lord, give steadfastness and wisdom to our leaders, especially our president; our governor; and all congressmen, judges and civil servants. Grant peace between nations and a spirit of humility and concord to our citizens. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

LORD God, You hear the cries of the severely oppressed and bless them with healing in Your appointed season. Comfort those who wait on You [*especially F.OS.L Prayer List*] ... and all those we each name and keep in our hearts in personal prayer. Increase their faith, and bring them through their trials. Of, if it be Your Will that they remain under their cross, give them grace sufficient to endure in peace and hope of the glory to come in the Resurrection on the Last Day. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, though it is not right to give the children's bread to dogs or to cast pearls before swine, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Receive us in Your mercy and enable all who commune to make the good confession, both of our sin and of You, our only Savior, that we may receive Your true body and blood for the forgiveness of all our sins. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

O God, You watch over the ways of Your people and call us to please You. Lead us to control our bodies and to flee all immorality, that we might show a godly witness in this world and adorn Your Gospel with a holy life. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting Your everlasting grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ, our LORD. Amen

LENT-2 REMINISCERE Matthew 15:21-28 BULL-DOG. GED FAITH 3.1.26 F.OS.

WHY GOD[?]

It's bad enough when people turn against us and our enemies make life difficult. It's bad enough knowing that the devil is against us and seeks to cause all sorts of harm in body and soul. But what do we do when it **seems as if God is against us**, when it appears as if He's our enemy? What do we do when He doesn't seem to care about our pain and trouble, doesn't answer our prayers, doesn't help us out as we hope?

OUTSIDERS

That is precisely the situation in which the Canaanite woman finds herself in today's Gospel. The Canaanites, you recall, were the ones whom God had told the Israelites to drive out of the Promised Land. Canaanites were ancient enemies of Israel, pagans, heathen. They were not among **God's chosen people**.

OUTSIDER'S FAITH

Yet knowing that she had no right to ask, this Canaanite woman still comes to Jesus and seeks His help. She had heard the Word of Christ. Faith came by that hearing. She just wouldn't take **NO** for an answer, this pesky Canaanite woman. No matter what Jesus said to her, she just kept coming back like a **bulldog**, with a faith that wouldn't let go no matter what. And even more amazing - this was an outsider to Israel! That's what this Gospel is all about this morning - God's universal grace to all in Jesus and the faith of a bulldog that won't let go no matter what.

TIME OFF [ME-TIME]

Jesus was taking some *well-deserved* "time off" on the North coast, the region of Tyre and Sidon. Gentile country. A woman from the region approached Jesus. That's **two strikes against her** already. A woman didn't approach a man in public. And a **Canaanite** wouldn't dare approach a **Jew** without causing an incident. Think of Palestinians and Israelis today and then multiply it. This woman's little girl is demon-possessed and suffering. Jesus is her last and only hope.

[PRETEND 2 B] CHOSEN

"Son of David, have mercy on me!" She tries to pass herself off as an Israelite. "Son of David" is the **Israelite term for the Messiah**. Maybe Jesus wouldn't notice her accent or her facial features. Perhaps she could trick Him into a blessing.

Test-1: v23 CRICKETS

Jesus says nothing. Stony dead silence. He will not be tricked or manipulated. He's **no vending machine** into Whom you plug your nickels and dimes of pious phrases and out pops your blessing on demand. No *"Name it, - and Claim it"* with Jesus.

VOICE OF EXCLUSION

The disciples think they have Jesus all figured out and jump on the bandwagon. *"She's a pain; she's following us all over the place; tell her to her to get outta here."* (Sound familiar? ...) It's the voice of exclusion, prejudice, hatred, suspicion toward the **outsider**, the **stranger**, the **unclean** and **unwashed** and **unbelieving**. It had been drilled into the disciples' heads from childhood. Canaanites were the descendants of Canaan, the (cursed) grandson of Noah. "Don't go near those people. Don't talk with them, eat with them, touch them. And don't you ever think of **marrying** one of them!"

TEST-2: v24 JEW/SHEEP Jesus ignores the disciples. And He sees through the woman's pious pretense. There's no pulling the wool over the Good Shepherd's eyes. He knows what makes you tick **better than you do**. [v.24] **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."** He reminds her of who she is: A filthy Canaanite. Certainly not one of the **"chosen."** How dare she even talk to Him?

WON'T TAKE NO *"LORD, help me,"* she says, now begging on her knees. This woman wouldn't take **No** for an answer. [Notice there's] **No more** pious *"Son of David"* = smooth talking. Now it's just the prayer of a desperate beggar – [simply] **LORD, help me.**

TEST-3: v26 DOG/CRUMBS **"It's not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."** [Wow!] Is this really the Jesus we **know** and **love** and **worship**? The Jesus who says *"Come to me with your burdens?"* He calls her a **"dog,"** yes, a "little dog" but still a dog. Dogs are considered dirty in the Middle East. Even still today. **Not** pampered pets; but garbage eating scavengers. "Dog" is what Israelites called Canaanites. It's an ethnic slur. *"You Canaanite dog, how dare you beg for the children's bread."*

[SHE'S] NOT LEAVING **Still she refuses to go away.** And she **doesn't stop praying.** In fact, she agrees with Jesus. *"Yes, LORD. That's right. Dogs don't deserve the bread of the table, but they do get to lick up the crumbs that fall from their master's table."* She's got Him, and she's not about to let Him go.

"FAITH-TALK" That's **faith talk** ... and, **from a Canaanite!** An **outsider!** A **non-Israelite.** This isn't some [yappy] puppy dog faith. This is a **Bulldog-faith** that locks its jaws on Jesus' words and won't let Him go. Crumbs from her Master's table are **a feast for her**, and she won't be denied. Oh, she may be a dirty Canaanite dog, but she clings in hope to Jesus **trusting that He's bigger than Israel** and that His mercy is wide enough to embrace even the likes of her.

PASS-THE-TEST v.28 **"Woman, you have great faith,"** Jesus says. He commends her, and commends her faith. Faith that demands to be given to. Faith that **doggedly** clings to Jesus even when He appears to reject her. Faith that hears a **"Yes"** buried inside the Lord's **"No."** Faith that **won't let go** of Jesus. *"Let it be done for you as you desire,"* Jesus says to her - warmly, gently now, accepting. And **the moment** He spoke those words, the demons left her little daughter, and she was healed. Just a word from the **Word Incarnate**, and the devils flee.

[ONLY A] NICE STORY? Now, that's a nice story, don't you think? It didn't start out that way, but it ends up in a happy place. A little girl is healed; a woman's faith is praised. It doesn't say anything about the disciples. I bet it left them wondering, *"What on earth is this Jesus up to? He even has compassion on Canaanites?"* I bet they spent some time reflecting on this episode: how an outsider to Israel can have greater faith than the insiders.

TAKE-HOME APPLICATION **We've walked in the disciples' sandals ourselves.** We've **judged** the outsider, **excluded** those who made us

uncomfortable, **drawn lines** and **shut doors**. We say that Jesus is the Savior of the **world**, but we act as though He were the Savior of the "smart and salvageable." We're pretty good with the exclusive side of Jesus, but a little slow on the inclusive part - what dogmaticians call the **gratia universalis** = **universal grace**. That can make us more than a bit uncomfortable to think that Jesus really is the Savior of the world, ... including those parts of the world we don't particularly like.

OUTSIDER FAITH The disciples needed a **new image of faith** - the faith of the outsider, the Canaanite, the dirty dog. **We need that view too**, or we begin to take pride in our **piety**, our **purity**, our **religion**, our **doctrine**, our **liturgy**, or whatever else we try to parade before the Lord. We don't deserve goodness from God. **We are all like that poor Canaanite woman.** We don't have a single chip to bargain with the Lord, and we dare not try to fool Him with our pious accents. We are beggars, who have no prayer than, "Lord, help me."

CONCLUSION: Each and every Sunday, the **Divine Service** puts us **"in the doghouse."** We say, *"I, a poor, miserable sinner."* and *"LORD, have mercy."* The Law does that. **It declares us all to be dirty dogs.** It sweeps away every pretension. It shuts our mouths of all boasting, every way that we've learned to butter up God with our merits. It declares everyone a sinner, it magnifies and amplifies sin to be utterly sinful. You think it's bad? It's worse than you ever imagined. We're as good as **dead** dogs, says the Law.

CRUMBS = GOLD But with the LORD, dogs get the crumbs that fall generously from the Master's table, and those crumbs turn out to be **rich fare.** *"Take, eat this is my Body given for you; take drink, this is my Blood shed for you."* **That's Jesus talking.** That's right, the same Jesus Who "went to the dogs" in His death on that **"garbage dump"** of a hill outside of Jerusalem where your sins and sin of the world were dealt with once and for all. We dogs **never had it so good** as [we're under or] **at** the Master's table.

HIS PEOPLE You, who once were **not** a people, are now the people of God. **Baptized.** You, who once did **not** know mercy, have **received** mercy in Jesus. **Forgiven.** You are a **priestly people**, a **holy nation**, a treasured **possession** of God. **Honored.** You, who have no inherent right to eat and drink from the Master's Table, have been given a place in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end. **Living** [Eternally]. You, conceived and born in sin and death, have been embraced in the death and life of Jesus.

SOLA GRATIA Scripture calls it "grace" = **undeserved kindness** from the heart of God to the **least**, the **lost**, the **dirty** dead "dog" of a sinner all for Christ's sake. **Amazing** grace, **universal** grace, **inclusive** grace. All in Jesus. And in Him, baptized and believing in Him, you are no longer dirty dogs but children of Abraham, sons and daughters of God, with **a place at the Master's table. IJ'N, Amen. SDG**