

Devotional Thoughts :: Persistence in Prayer by Rev. Shibi Abraham

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Mark 7:24-30

Vs. 28 But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

There are many reasons why we pray. One of the most important is to understand God's will. Emil Fackenheim, wrote in his book, *Paths to Jewish Belief*, "We pray not to change God's purpose, but our own" so as to make them conform to God's. Having thus changed them, we become willing to act as God's co-workers. Prayers should transform the person who prays. According to Harvey Fields in his book, *With All Your Heart*, the Hebrew word *lehitpaalel* which is translated as "to pray" actually means "to judge oneself." He also wrote that prayers, "should encourage us toward the ethical examination of ourselves and the society in which we live."

When we pray we should examine ourselves and strive to become more like God, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ. Christ taught us the importance of prayer, of talking with God. For Jesus, prayer was not a ritual, but a necessary part of life. Even after spending hours addressing the needs of the crowds, he would still spend hours in prayer (ex. Matthew 14:23). Jesus prayed that God's will be done (Matthew 6:10), even in the midst of pain and anguish (Luke 22:41-44). He prayed for his enemies even as they were killing him (Luke 23:34).

This gospel portion, shows a woman who was willing to cross numerous social and cultural barriers to get healing for her daughter. When she did not originally get the response that she wanted from Jesus, she persisted in her request. Her response, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." shows her own development of faith. She understands that she is not worthy of help, instead she appeals to God's Grace. (Psalms 123:2 - As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of the master, as the eyes of the female slave look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy.) Her response also shows that she is not asking Jesus to take away Grace or Mercy from other people. She understands that God's Mercy is so great and abundant that it is sufficient for everyone.

We also should be persistent in prayer, and examine ourselves daily to conform our lives to the Will of God.

PRAYER

Lord, change my will so that it becomes yours. Amen.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Prayer should change the person who prays.