

OBJECT LESSON: THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

Matthew 15:12-28; Mark 7:24-30

THEME: When facing life's trials, don't give up. Have faith in God.

OBJECT: A church hymnal

Have you ever heard of Fanny J. Crosby? Fanny was a hymn writer and poet who wrote over 8,000 hymns! I looked through this hymnal that I brought with me this morning and I discovered that there are seventeen hymns in this hymnal written by Fanny J. Crosby. A very short list of the most popular hymns written by Fanny would include such great hymns as "To God Be the Glory," "I Am Thine, O Lord," "Tell Me the Story of Jesus," "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross," and "All the Way My Savior Leads Me." You may be surprised to learn that Fanny was totally blind. She lost her sight when she was only six weeks old through the negligence of a doctor who was treating an inflammation in her eyes.

Because she was blind, I am sure that many times Fanny heard the words, "You can't do this" or "You can't do that." One reason I feel sure she heard those words is that she once wrote a song entitled, "Never Give Up!" The words to the refrain of that song go like this:

Never give up, never give up,
Never give up to thy sorrows,
Jesus will bid them depart;
Trust in the Lord, trust in the Lord,
Sing when your trials are greatest,
Trust in the Lord and take heart.

Fannie never gave up! "Blindness," she wrote, "cannot keep the sunlight of hope from the trusting soul." Fanny had great faith in God and put her trust in him to get her through the obstacles she faced in her life. She never gave up!

Our Bible lesson today tells about another woman who had great faith and refused to give up. The Bible doesn't tell us her name, it simply calls her "a Canaanite woman." That means that she was a Gentile and, as you know, Jesus and his disciples were Jews. The Jews would have very little to do with gentiles. The Canaanite woman met Jesus one day as he was traveling in the region of Tyre and Sidon. She came toward him crying out, "Have mercy on me, for my daughter is possessed by an evil spirit."

Jesus did not reply to the woman and his disciples came to him complaining that she was bothering them and asked him to tell her to leave. Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel."

But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, "Lord, help me!"

Jesus replied, "It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

The woman answered, "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table."

"Dear woman," Jesus said to her, "your faith is great. Your request is granted." At that very moment, her daughter was healed.

What if she had given up? What if her faith had not been so strong? The end of this story would be quite different, wouldn't it? Let us follow the example set by Fanny Crosby and the Canaanite woman. Let's "Keep the Faith" and "Never Give Up!"

PRAYER:

Father, we place our faith and trust in you. When we face obstacles and trials in our daily life, help us to keep our faith in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.