A Message from Luther

Have you ever thought that God does not hear your prayers? Or, perhaps that His answer to your heart’s desire is no? I think you will find perspective and comfort in the words of Martin Luther. The following excerpt is from a sermon by Martin Luther based on Matthew 15:21-28.

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

View the full sermon at www.orlutheran.com/html/mlsemt15.html
The Faith of the Syrophoenician Woman

by Martin Luther

First, when the Syrophoenician woman follows Jesus upon hearing of his fame, she cries with assured confidence that he would, according to his reputation, deal mercifully with her. Christ certainly acts differently, as if to let her faith and good confidence be in vain and turn his good reputation into a lie, so that she could have thought:

Is this the gracious, friendly man? Or are these the good words that I have heard spoken about him, upon which I have depended? It must not be true; he is my enemy and will not receive me; nevertheless he might speak a word and tell me that he will have nothing to do with me. Now he is as silent as a stone. Behold, this is a very hard rebuff, when God appears so earnest and angry and conceals his grace so high and deep; as those know so well, who feel and experience it in their hearts. Therefore, she imagines he will not fulfill what he has spoken, and will let his Word be false; as it happened to the children of Israel at the Red Sea and to many other saints.

"She continues immediately and firmly to cling in her confidence to the good news she had heard and embraced concerning him, and never gives up."
Now, what does the poor woman do? She turns her eyes from all this unfriendly treatment of Christ; all this does not lead her astray, neither does she take it to heart, but she continues immediately and firmly to cling in her confidence to the good news she had heard and embraced concerning him, and never gives up. We must also do the same and learn firmly to cling to the Word, even though God with all his creatures appears different than his Word teaches. But, oh, how painful it is to nature and reason, that this woman should strip herself of self and forsake all that she experienced, and cling alone to God’s bare Word, until she experienced the contrary. May God help us in time of need and of death to possess like courage and faith!

Secondly, since her cry and faith avail nothing, the disciples approach with their faith, and pray for her, and imagine they will surely be heard. But while they thought he should be more tenderhearted, he became only the more indifferent, as we see and think. For now he is silent no more nor leaves them in doubt; he declines their prayer and says: “I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This rebuff is still harder since not only our own person is rejected, but the only comfort that remains to us, namely, the comfort and prayers of pious and holy persons, are rejected. For our last resort, when we feel that God is ungracious or we are in need, is that we go to pious, spiritual persons and...
there seek counsel and help, and they are willing to help as love demands; and yet, that may amount to nothing, even they may not be heard and our condition becomes only worse.

Here one might upbraid Christ with all the words in which he promised to hear his saints, as Mt 18:19: “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them.” Likewise, Mk 11:24: “All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;” and many more like passages. What becomes of such promises in this woman’s case? Christ, however, promptly answers and says: Yes, it is true, I hear all prayers, but I gave these promises only to the house of Israel. What do you think? Is not that a thunderbolt that dashes both heart and faith into a thousand pieces, when one feels that God’s Word, upon which one trusts, was not spoken for him, but applies only to others? Here all saints and prayers must be speechless, yea, here the heart must let go of the Word, to which it would gladly hold, if it would consult its own feelings.

But what does the poor woman do? She does not give up, she clings to the Word, although it be torn out of her heart by force, is not turned away by this stern answer, still firmly believes his goodness is yet concealed in that answer, and still she will not pass judgment that Christ is or may be ungracious. That is persevering steadfastness.

Thirdly, she follows Christ into the house, as Mark 7:24-25 informs us, perseveres, falls down at his feet, and says: “Lord, help me!” There she received her last mortal blow, in that Christ said in her face, as the words tell, that she was a dog, and not worthy to partake of the children’s bread. What will she say to this! Here he presents her in a bad light, she is a condemned and an outcast person, who is not to be reckoned among God’s chosen ones.
That is an eternally unanswerable reply, to which no one can give a satisfactory answer. Yet she does not despair, but agrees with his judgment and concedes, she is a dog, and desires also no more than a dog is entitled to, namely, that she may eat the crumbs that fall from the table of the Lord. Is not that a masterly stroke as a reply? She catches Christ with his own words. He compares her to a dog, she concedes it, and asks nothing more than that he let her be a dog, as he himself judged her to be.

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All this, however, is written for our comfort and instruction, that we may know how deeply God conceals his grace before our face, and that we may not estimate him according to our feelings and thinking, but strictly according to his Word. For here you see, though Christ appears to be even hardhearted, yet he gives no final decision by saying “No.” All his answers indeed sound like no, but they are not no, they remain undecided and pending. For he does not say: I will not hear thee; but is silent and passive, and says neither yes nor no. In like manner he does not say she is not of the house of Israel; but he is sent only to the house of Israel; he leaves it undecided and pending between yes and no. So he does not say, Thou art a dog, one should not give thee of the children’s bread; but it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the
dogs; leaving it undecided whether she is a dog or not. Yet all those trials of her faith sounded more like no than yes; but there was more yea in them than nay; aye, there is only yes in them, but it is very deep and very concealed, while there appears to be nothing but no.

By this is set forth the condition of our heart in times of temptation; Christ here represents how it feels. It thinks there is nothing but "no," and yet, that is not true. Therefore, it must turn from this feeling and lay hold of, and retain, the deep spiritual "yes" under and above the "no" with a firm faith in God's Word, as this poor woman does, and say, "God is right in his judgment which he visits upon us;" then we have triumphed and caught Christ in his own words. As, for example, when we feel in our conscience that God rebukes us as sinners and judges us unworthy of the kingdom of heaven, then we experience hell, and we think we are lost forever. Now whoever understands here the actions of this poor woman and catches God in his own judgment, and says: Lord, it is true, I am a sinner and not worthy of thy grace; but still thou hast promised sinners forgiveness, and thou art come not to call the righteous, but, as St. Paul says in 1 Tim 1: 15, "to save sinners." Behold, then must God according to his own judgment have mercy upon us.

More of Luther's Sermons

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Lexington, KY has collected 117 sermons by Martin Luther and posted them online at www.orlutheran.com/html/mlserms.html

These sermons are taken from "The Sermons of Martin Luther," published by Baker Book House (Grand Rapids, MI), 1983. This eight volume set was a reprint of John Nicholas Lenker's translation of Luther's Church Postil. Lenker's edition originally appeared in 1905 as "The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther," volumes 1-14, published by Lutherans in all Lands. These sermons were scanned and edited by The Dr. Richard Bucher and are in the public domain.

2 cups cubed cooked ham
1/2 cup chopped green onions
1/2 cup margarine, melted
3 eggs, well beaten
1 can cream-style corn
1 can whole kernel corn with red and green peppers, drained
1 pkg. corn muffin mix
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Find detailed instructions for this and other co-op inspired recipes online, at www.bringinghomethebrakebush.wordpress.com.
Blessings

As we spend the holiday season with those we love, or perhaps far from home and away from those we love, I want to focus on the unexpected blessings that come from this Seminary journey. When we first arrived here, I asked other wives “How do you live?” It was a financial question, and they understood. One wife said, “You just wait for a check to come in the mail.” At the time, I thought she was being sarcastic, but I quickly learned that she was being completely serious and straightforwardly honest.

Malachi 3:10 says “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” (ESV) It’s easy to think of this verse in terms of money only, because we often think “tithe” means money. But, I think that this is a verse about trust; and Seminary is certainly a journey where many of us have put our full trust in God and put Him to the test. I know my family has. We sold practically everything we owned before we came here; and other than student loans, we had no plans for income and no real concept of how we would live and pay our bills over the next four years. We arrived with a high mileage van that died within the first week. It needed a whole new engine. For the next three weeks, I unpacked the house while my husband walked to Greek class. I pushed our stroller and wagon to the co-op and filled them with groceries each week, praying it would be enough to feed our family of eight and thanking God that we’d rented a house that was only one mile away from the Seminary. My faith was tested and my God was tested. How long could we really go without a car? Then, one day, the mechanic’s bill was paid. The money came from someone who didn’t want credit or thanks or any acknowledgement at all... it was just done.

During this time, we received more than just money to fix our van. We were also blessed with a Seminary sister who sent her husband to pick us up from the side of the road, even though he’d never met us; another who drove us to get our van when it was ready, and others who prayed for us throughout our hardship. I learned that there are many things that I cannot do myself, but there is nothing that God cannot do, and He often uses others to accomplish His miracles.

I could share many more stories of unexpected blessings that have come to us over the past few years, but every wife I’ve met here has a story of her own, so I’ve asked them to share some of their stories with you. Enjoy and be blessed!

Corinne Johnson
4th Year Wife, SWAN Editor
Walking with my husband along this path known as Seminary, I realized that I really didn’t believe in the Lord’s provision. I have since learned that it is the Lord who ultimately provides for our every need and we are shown daily just how much he provides for us and loves us.

There have been many situations where I have fallen to my knees in gratitude for the gifts he has bestowed upon us. Special mailbox surprises, gift cards and Christmas presents from a supporting church, family members reaching out from hundreds of miles away, friends delivering a meal to our family, and so many more. All of these gifts are quite humbling and remind us of God’s great providence for us as his people.

There may be times where we feel the Lord is not providing for us. We all have wants and desires. However, we must look to the blessings surrounding us: a warm home, clothes and food generously provided for our family through the co-op, friends that look out for us, and family to lean on when needed. I am constantly reminded that when we rely on God and trust that He will provide our every need, we do not go without.

Dana Gerdes
4th Year Wife

**2 Peter 1:3**
His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

**2 Corinthians 9:8**
And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things and at all times, having everything you need you will abound in every good work.

**Genesis 50:21**
So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.
Blessed

We’ve had several couples come over and talk to our family when we’ve dined out. They see my hubby in his collar and come over to tell us how impressed they are with our boys and how well they behave. Upon leaving the restaurant(s) our bill was paid in full.

- Anonymous

When we planned to visit, I figured the cost to be $162. We had exactly $162 and change left over in our Dave Ramsey style envelopes.

- Anonymous

I remember the finances being very tight and I was starting to get really anxious and concerned (I’m the financial ninja). This went on for about a week and I kept reminding myself that the Lord was in control, not me. Pray unceasingly. The next week, a very large check showed up in the mail. I had a major cry on my knees in our lower hallway. That was the first time I felt completely overwhelmed, humbled and undeserving, all at once.

- Anonymous

Meet Jen

My name is Jen Koontz. I’m the wife to third year seminary student, Adam, and mother to Christian (2), Lydia (just under a year), and another little one to be born right around Valentine’s Day. After growing up on a farm in rural southeastern Minnesota, I attended Hillsdale College to study political science and Christian studies. Following graduation, I worked for four years at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, outside of Philadelphia. There I had the opportunity to meet my future husband at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church and we were later married there in September 2009. This year we are living in Sayville, New York, while Adam is on vicarage and we are very grateful for all that God has given us and for this opportunity to be part of another community of believers.

"We are very GRATEFUL...for this opportunity to be part of another community of believers.”
Bloom
Where You are Planted
...and Transplanted...and Transplanted

I’ve had some experience moving around. When I was growing up, we moved to different states twice—once when I was in the middle of second grade, and again between my ninth- and tenth-grade years—and since leaving for college I have lived in eleven different homes in eight different cities or suburbs and four states or provinces. At some point during that time, my mom cross-stitched a picture with the above motto, and I think it’s a great motto for a seminary wife.
When we came to Fort Wayne in 2009, I had lived in the same house for sixteen years—my longest stay anywhere. But even during that time, I’d made other kinds of moves. I got married, and I became a mom. In 2005 I left the congregation and denomination I’d been a member of for fourteen years. When my husband and I found a new (LCMS) church to settle in, I immediately started putting down roots—joining the choir, attending the Sunday morning Bible study, and participating in VBS for the first time in my life. By 2009 that church was a family to us, a strong support as we launched our seminary journey. Though we haven’t seen a lot of them lately, whenever we do go back we are warmly welcomed—it’s like a family reunion. In Eric’s fieldwork congregation, though I knew we would only be there for two years, I joined the choir and the Sunday Bible class and made several more good friends, several of whom kept in touch via email or Facebook and provided much-needed companionship and support while we were far from our families on vicarage. At our vicarage congregation, I got involved in the church’s nut-roll-baking fundraising efforts, and the friendships I made there deeply enriched our year and remain with me now that we are back in Fort Wayne.

I know sometimes wives hesitate to make connections in temporary congregations, but I would encourage you to think not in terms of losing friends at the end but of expanding your circle of friendships. In this internet age, you’re hardly leaving people behind. Instead, you are weaving a strong net of connection that has the potential to hold you up under the most trying circumstances. The Bible says, “a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12b)—how much stronger a net of many strands stretching all over the map!

POLLY RAPP is from the Detroit, Michigan area and is married to fourth-year, second-career student Eric, who is originally from Ohio. Raised Catholic, she spent fourteen years as a Methodist before gratefully achieving doctrinal stability in the LCMS. She divides her time between freelance writing for a reference publisher, sewing, various arts and crafts, walking, reading, making folk music with Eric, and mothering their nine-year-old daughter, Lauren.
Blessed

“Do you have a place to live?” asked our admissions counselor, soon after we sold our home. “Well...we have a place in mind that we could buy, but it’s not ideal,” was our reply. He told us that there was a four bedroom home available in the country, provided that Stan would agree to do his two years of fieldwork at the church next door. They sent us photos of the house, and we said yes. One month later we were in Indiana, driving 35 minutes north of the seminary. “If you don’t like it you don’t have to take it,” said the pastor. I thought, “The 26 foot moving truck is showing up today. Where else would we go?” We walked in to the house, and... we loved it. So much so that we are still living there after Stan finished his vicarage at Zion in August, and is now completing his 4th year at seminary. It has been a tremendous blessing to us to live in the same home for our entire time at the seminary. It has relieved financial stress, and allowed us to put down roots. This is one way God has given us our daily bread.

- Dana Palmer
4th Year Wife

Meet Dana

My name is Dana Palmer. I have been married to my wonderful husband, Stan, for 20 years. We homeschool our children: Elise (17), John (13), Lindsay (11), and Bethany (9). When we married, I was finishing my elementary education degree and Stan was finishing his Master’s in education. We wanted to be missionaries. Instead, after 16 years of marriage, we converted from modern evangelicalism to the LCMS. The following year, we moved from Kansas City to seminary, and feel very much at home in northern Indiana. Our next adventure will be finding out where Stan will be called as a pastor in April! God’s blessings.
Hi, I’m Amy Ingle, my husband Chad is currently serving a delayed vicarage in Seymour, Tennessee. He’s a second career student and we have three children ages 10, 8 and 4. The last three years of seminary has been full of ups and downs. The financial setback of our middle class life was a bit unsettling but God has always come through with the help of His many wonderful congregations and individuals. I remember vividly sitting in our kitchen in Fort Wayne a few days after moving there. The reality of rent, groceries and all the other obvious expenses were starting to sink in. I am usually a very optimistic person but I felt fear. We would have Chad’s unemployment checks but we knew it wouldn’t be enough to make ends meet. Here’s the “check in the mail” part. We received a letter that day from a church in Myrtle Beach, SC saying they contacted the Southeastern District and wanted to adopt a seminary family. They were going to send us $100 a month during our four years at seminary. I couldn’t do anything but cry and thank God. $100 may not seem like much but the funny thing is, Chad and I have vacationed at MB our whole lives and know exactly where the church is! So, the personal connection made it seem even more special. I believe God uses His servants to ease our fears and let us know He always provides. I have kept in contact with Joyce from the church since then. We write, we email, I feel like I know her. We’re too far from MB to visit right now but trust me, I can’t wait to meet this wonderful lady and her Outreach Ministry group who run the second hand shop that has helped us since Aug ’09. Others have adopted us over the last 3 years and we are so grateful for them all! But this one church has always been a little more dear to my heart.

Blessed

I looked at the house we live in now online for quite some time before we moved. I never thought we could afford to rent this house, but have faithfully been here going on 4 years now. When we did a walk-through I just stood in the kitchen looking out the window with an overwhelming sense of peace knowing this was our house. The leasing agent asked if I was going to walk through, and I replied, “hope, don’t need to” and we signed the papers right then.

- Anonymous

We had the best Christmas last year when a supporting church bought gifts for our whole family, along with a large stack of gift cards that we’re still using now. We personally have never had that many presents to open at Christmas.

- Anonymous
My name is Sarah Jacobsen, wife of 4th year seminarian Adam Jacobsen. In June our little boy was born, Isaac, who is quite the giggly blessing. I was born and raised in Texas, then went to college in the Chicago area where I achieved a bachelor’s degree in communication and theology. In my spare time I enjoy being creative in many settings such as decorating, organizing, and card making.

**PHILIPPIANS 4:19**

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

This passage is my confirmation verse—and rightly so. Worrying is something I’m very good at. In fact, if there was such a thing as “Worrying Olympics” I’d probably get a gold medal - or two! While here at seminary the Lord has taught me over and over that He truly does provide and that I need to only depend on Him. Whether it be a generous check from a supporting church that’s “coincidentally” the exact amount needed to pay for our vehicle’s repair, or from the co-op a nice pair of dress pants perfect for my job or being sold a vehicle for one hundred pennies, the Lord truly does provide. He has taught me this lesson over and over, showing me that He cares for my family at all times. Be encouraged, dear sisters in Christ, by this promise:

- Sarah Jacobsen
4th Year Wife

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Meet Sarah

Blessed