

Silence Of God

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God will come at an unexpected moment. He may not come as we expect. But, certainly He will come. He will hear our prayer one day.

One day I was meditating on the conversation that took place between Jesus and the Canaanite woman narrated in the Scripture (Mt 15:21-28, Mk 7:24-30). I was a bit disturbed at the way Jesus humiliated that poor Canaanite woman. She had a lot of expectations from Jesus. She was sure that her daughter would be healed by the mighty power of Jesus. With this hope, she came to Jesus. But, unfortunately, "He did not answer her at all" (Mt. 15:23). He was silent in front of her. All her expectations were been shattered. Even the disciples came to her aid. But Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:24). But, she was persistent and did not leave him. She pleaded with him again, "Lord help me". He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to dogs". Though she was disappointed again, she said, "Yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table". At last, this time, Jesus heard her prayer. He healed her daughter.

I wondered to see why Jesus took such a long time to hear the prayer of that poor woman. Why was He silent in front of her? The reason commonly understood is that she was a gentile woman. But, if we examine the entire New Testament, we see that many gentiles were healed by Jesus (Luke 17:17). Certainly, Jesus had a strange plan when he behaved like this. What was that plan? Why was Jesus silent?

There are also incidents even in our own lives when we experience the 'cruel' silence of God. I remember an event that happened during the Tsunami period. A woman gave birth to a child many years after her marriage through the powerful intercession of Our Lady of Velankanni. As a token of her gratitude, she visited the Velankanni Shrine, when the child became six. She offered a gold ring to our Blessed Mother Mary and surrendered her son to her. After this, as she was purchasing something from one of the shops in front of the Shrine, the disastrous Tsunami hit and the giant waves took her only son away. Tired after searching for her son, she came back to the altar and being overcome with grief and with a sorrowful heart, she looked at the face of Jesus and asked, "Jesus, why have you done this to me? Why are you silent in my life?". These questions echo even today through many instances of our life.

Even in the Scripture, we see many examples where the powerful God maintains silence amidst problems of human beings. God was silent in the life of the woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years (Lk 8:12). Another woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years (Lk 13:10). For eighteen years, God was silent in her life. We see a paralyzed man who had been ill for thirty eight years (Jn 5). It is annoying to know that God was silent in his life for such a long time. We see another incident, viz. Lazarus, whom Jesus loved very much,

fell ill (Jn 11). He was about to die. Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, informed Jesus about this. But Jesus did not go and heal Lazarus. He was silent. He waited until the fourth day to reach the home of Lazarus by when he was covered with stench. What we notice here is that Martha and Mary lost all their expectations and hope to save Lazarus, because Jesus did not turn up at the appropriate time. They too experienced the 'cruel' silence of Jesus. But the true climax comes not with the shedding of tears by Jesus over the dead man Lazarus, but rather after the mysterious silence, Jesus with his powerful voice calls out loudly, "Lazarus, come out" and the dead man comes out.

Jesus always comes at unexpected moments with a mighty powerful voice, after a mysterious silence. After a long 12 years of silence, the woman with haemorrhages experienced the power of the mighty voice of Jesus at an unexpected moment. The same with the crippled woman and also with the paralyzed man. This is what we see in the life of that Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:28).

Then the question arises again, why is God silent in the miseries of our lives? An example from the life of Jesus Himself can give us this answer. As far as the Scripture is concerned, Jesus prayed for Himself only once in His life. It was at the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father to remove the cup of sorrow from him (Mt. 26: 39). But, God did not hear this prayer. But rather, I would say, Heavenly Father heard the prayer of Jesus three days after His death. But there was a long silence before that. Because the Father wanted Jesus to undergo that painful suffering so that the whole world could be saved. Therefore, every silence of God is salvific. Make use of this "SILENCE" to save others and thus continue the salvific act of Christ. Jesus knew the meaning of that silence. That is why Jesus told his disciples, "the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the Scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him"(Mk 10:33,34). Jesus knew that He had to undergo pain. But he prayed so much that He could be strengthened to face those events. This is what prayer means. But we have to undergo suffering and uncertainties in our lives so that we are able to share the salvific act of Christ and thus save others through our sufferings. It is through our suffering that we are shaped. But, do not be discouraged by suffering. Pray constantly so that we can be strengthened to overcome the sufferings in life.

Therefore, God will come at an unexpected moment. He may not come as we expect. But, certainly He will come. He will hear our prayer one day. Prayers are like smoke, which always go up. One day, it will reach the destination. We need to do only one thing. Cling to Jesus like the Canaanite woman till He comes and enters our lives. Be "stubborn" with Jesus. In Gen. 32:26, Jacob told God, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me". And God blessed him. In Mk 10:46-52, we see Bartimaeus who shouted out and said, "Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me". Many asked him to be quiet. But he cried out even more loudly. Jesus stood STILL. Therefore, call upon His name, HE WILL STAND STILL AND LISTEN TO OUR PRAYER.

(*February 2008 TAVOR VOICE*)