

Mark 7:24-30
First fruits of the Great Gentile Harvest

²⁴ And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.^[a] And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. ²⁵ But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶ ^(AH) Now the woman was a ^(AI) Gentile, ^(AJ) a Syrophenician by birth. And she **begged** him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ And he said to her, "Let the children be ^(AK) fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and ^(AL) throw it to the dogs." ²⁸ **But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's ^(AM) crumbs."** ²⁹ And he said to her, "For this statement you may ^(AN) go your way; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

Intro:

We don't know her name, but we know she was a mother. And she was a mother with a suffering child. You mothers here today know what that's like. You would do anything to see your child made well. You pray fervently over and over again for the child's healing.

This child was a female, a girl – she is described as a "little" girl – maybe she was 8 or 10 years old. We are told something of the nature of her affliction – she had a an "unclean spirit."

She had an evil spirit – we are not told what effect it had on her. In Matthew 14:17-18 we read of another child who was afflicted by a demon:

¹⁴ ^(A) And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has ^(B) seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and ^(C) they could not heal him." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered, "O faithless and ^(D) twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? ^(E) How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸ And Jesus ^(E) rebuked the demon, ^[a] and it ^[b] came out of him, and ^(G) the boy was healed instantly.

Whatever way the demon, the unclean spirit, was harassing and tormenting and afflicting this child, we do not know, but we know it must have been bad.

And we have no knowledge whatsoever of how this may have happened – how could a little child become infected with an evil spirit? But no matter, the woman had come to the right person, the only person, really, who could heal and deliver her daughter.

She had no doubt heard of this man Jesus from Nazareth. She had heard of his teaching and his miracles. And somehow she knew something of the OT prophecies

about the coming of the Messiah and what he would be doing when he arrived. We know this because in the parallel account in Matthew 15, we read in verse 22:

. 22 And behold, ^(AD)a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, ^(AE)“Have mercy on me, **O Lord, Son of David**; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”

She knew that the great anointed one of the Jews, when he would come, would be a descendent of King David. So somehow she had learned from the Hebrew scriptures, maybe she had visited a Jewish synagogue, she knew something of the ancestry of the Messiah and she knew something of the mighty works he would do. The reports she had heard of his healing miracles confirmed to her heart and mind who this Jesus was and she addressed him with the appropriate title, Lord, Son of David. Indeed, Jesus was and is Lord and he is the descendent of David. We read, for example in Romans 1:1-4 about....

“...the gospel of God,² which ^(D)he promised beforehand ^(E)through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, ^(E)who was descended from David^[b] ^(G)according to the flesh ⁴ and ^(H)was declared to be the Son of God ^(I)in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord...”

This, of course, is not the only woman we've read about in Mark's gospel who had great faith in Jesus to bring healing – remember the woman who had had hemorrhaging of blood in her body for 12 years: “If I can only get close enough to touch the edge of his garment, I know I will be healed.” She got close enough and she was healed!

But that woman was a Jewess but his woman was not. We read in Mark 7:24:
24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Where were Tyre and Sidon? Why did Jesus go there?

Tyre and Sidon were coastal cities of Phoenicia, part of Syria [present day southern Lebanon]. Tyre was 40 miles NW of Capernaum. It was a great rock (it's name means “the rock”) - connected to land by 3,000 foot bridge. It had a great natural harbor, as did Sidon which was 25 miles up the coast from Tyre. From Tyre and Sidon came the sailors who were famous for having discovered how to navigate the open seas by the stars.

The important thing to note here is that Jesus had gone into Gentile territory. Why did he go there? We read again, “24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

It's like Jesus stood up and said, “I'm going to head for Tyre and Sidon today.” His disciples may have been baffled. Why would he go there. That was Gentile territory – these were pagan people, not worshippers of Yahweh, not Jews, not part of the chosen people. Doesn't Jesus know we, as devout Jews, shouldn't be mixing with pagan

people? We shouldn't be rubbing shoulders with them and we certainly should not sit down and eat at the same table as they do.

John Reisinger writes:

"The old covenant governed how sinners approached God, but it also governed interpersonal relationships. Under the old covenant, the Jew was forbidden to even eat a meal with a Gentile. Remember how scandalized the Pharisees were and how vehemently they denounced the behavior of our Lord. One of his acts that especially irked them was the Jesus went so far as to "even eat with sinners."

But Jesus goes and there is only one incident recorded in his visit there - It is his encounter with this woman. This must have been his primary purpose – to encounter this woman, a Gentile woman.

You remember his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. It seems his discussion with her was no chance meeting – it was a divine encounter – to bring her and some of her townspeople to faith in him as the "Messiah who would come."

We read in verse 26, **Now the woman was a (A1)Gentile, (A2)a Syrophenician by birth.**

so here was another non-Jewish woman. She was from the Gentile region of Syrophenicia and she had been born a Gentile. She did not have an ounce of Jewish blood in her. But she did have something of crucial importance - she had great faith in Jesus. This Gentile's faith was a very important incident and what happened here is a foretaste of what would happen in the near future after Jesus' death and resurrection and his commissioning of his disciples to go to all the Gentile nations and preach the gospel to "every creature."

This woman, was in fact, a picture of your own faith, of my own faith, of our own salvation in Christ as we trust in him and believe in him. We talk about "forefathers in the faith:" – this was one of our "foremothers" in the faith – she went before us as a woman of faith.

It is not insignificant that she was a woman and not a man. Jesus came to break the mold, to break man-made traditions and prejudices. Jesus ignored the age-old tradition of placing women in a lower status than.

This woman's faith was a foretaste, a down payment, a first fruit of the great Gentile harvest to come.

Let's look at their conversation. Verse 26 says, **she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.**

In Matt. 15:22 we read,)a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, (AE)“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”

So she was crying and begging Jesus to heal and deliver her little daughter. She was desperate but she believed Jesus could help her. What was Jesus' response?

Verse 27: ²⁷ And he said to her, “Let the children be (D)fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and (E)throw it to the dogs.”

What does Jesus mean by this? What he means is that the Jewish people should be fed first, that is they should be the ones who receive his teaching, his healing, his miracles, his ministry. He came first and foremost as the Promised One to bring salvation and healing and blessing to them. This was his primary ministry and responsibility. And he should not be neglectful his own people, and instead direct his ministry to Gentiles – those outside the Jewish faith. **He must minister to his own people first** in order to fulfill the promises in the OT that the Messiah would come to them.

Let's look at some texts that indicate this: (his own people first)

Exo. 4:22 - ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son.

Deut. 32:6 - Do you thus repay the Lord,
you foolish and senseless people?
Is not he your father, who created you,
who made you and established you?

Isa. 1:2-3 - Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;
for the Lord has spoken:
“Children^[a] have I reared and brought up,
but they have rebelled against me.
³ The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's crib,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.”

Jer 31:9 - With weeping they shall come,
and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back,
I will make them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble,
for I am a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hos. 11:1 -

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

Rom. 9:4 - ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

John 4:22 - ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Cranfield:

For him during his ministry to conduct a mission to the Gentiles would have been to depart from the way of obedience." P. 248

"Jesus accepts this divinely appointed order and follows faithfully the path ordained for the Lord's Servant. So his whole earthly life was given to Israel. He was "made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises give unto the fathers "(Rom. 15:8).

But there are also many prophecies in the OT regarding the coming of the nations to faith in the Messiah, to partaking of Abraham's faith:

Gen. 12:1-3 - ² Now the Lord said^[a] to Abram, "Go from your country^[b] and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed

Reisinger:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3:28). God called Abraham and gave him a promise that would include "all families of the earth." He fulfilled that promise in Christ. That promise could not be fulfilled under the law, because the law enforced d separation between Jews and Gentiles. Christ unites believing Jews and believing Gentiles by giving them both a new identity – his own. ethnic identity no longer dictates behavior; it is no longer prescriptive." P. 205-206, Studies in Galatians.

Psalm 67:1-3 - May God ^(B)be gracious to us and bless us

and make his face to ^(C)shine upon us, *Selah*

² that ^(D)your way may be known on earth,

your ^(E)saving power among all nations.

³^(F)Let the peoples praise you, O God;

let all the peoples praise you!

Luke 4:26-27 - ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when ^(A)the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them ^(B)but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.²⁷ And ^(C)there were many lepers^[a] in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, ^(D)but only Naaman the Syrian.”

Isa. 2:2-3 -

It shall come to pass in the latter days
 that the mountain of the house of the Lord
 shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
 and shall be lifted up above the hills;
 and all the nations shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
 “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
 to the house of the God of Jacob,
 that he may teach us his ways

Texts which indicate both the coming of salvation first, to Jews, and then to nations also:

Luke 4:26-27 - ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when ^(A)the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them ^(B)but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.²⁷ And ^(C)there were many lepers^[a] in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, ^(D)but only Naaman the Syrian.”

Isa. 49:5-6 - And now the Lord says,
 he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
 to bring Jacob back to him;
 and that Israel might be gathered to him—
 for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord,
 and my God has become my strength—
⁶ he says:
 “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
 that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Rom. 1:16 - ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Acts 3:25-26 - ²⁵ ***You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’*** ²⁶ ***God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”***

Rom. 15:8-12

⁸ For I tell you that Christ ^(A) became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order ^(B) to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order ^(C) that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

^(D) “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

¹⁰ And again it is said,

^(E) “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

¹¹ And again,

^(E) “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.”

¹² And again Isaiah says,

^{(G)(H)} “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; ^(I) in him will the Gentiles hope.”

So the woman had hope:

He quotes Calvin: it is no doubt true that Jesus intends “not to extinguish the woman’s faith” by his apparent coldness “but rather to whet her zeal and inflame her ardor”

To the nations (the Gentiles):

Matt. 28 – Jesus’ command to take gospel to the whole world.

Col. 1:24-28 - ²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me..

Rev. 5:9-10 - “Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for ^(Q)you were slain, and by your blood ^(P)you ransomed people for God
from ^(Q)every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them ^(R)a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”

If you're a Christian person today, you've been given grace to repent and believe like this Syrophenician woman. Therefore, give many thanks to Christ for his mercy toward you and your loved ones.

Then rise up and take your place in the long and devout line of those trust in Christ Jesus and spare no effort or expense in rescuing his people out of every nation, tribe, and tongue. Let us take up our calling from Christ to proclaim Christ to all the world's people groups.

The fields are white unto harvest, Gospel laborers are needed to sign up and commit to the work before us.

Closing Prayer...

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