

More than a Little Crumb

Message 31

6.17.18

Mark 7:24–37 (NIV)

Jesus Honors a Syrophenician Woman's Faith

7:24–30pp—Mt 15:21–28

²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet.

²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁸ "Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

²⁹ Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."

³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Matthew 15:21–28 (NIV)

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁷ "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

1. How many of you have read or heard this passage and wondered why Jesus was being so mean?

A. I know I have.

1. I have sat before this Scripture and wondered, "What was Jesus thinking?"

2. When we don't understand passages, we either ignore them or make excuses.

B. What if I told you that this passage makes perfect sense in context?

1. This morning I want to show you how Jesus used the suffering of this woman and her daughter to shatter the disciples' preconceived ideas of other people.

2. When we grasp the sinfulness of our view of people, we realize we need to change.

3. When we realize how loving Jesus is, then we can trust Him with our own personal sickness, problem, and brokenness.

3. Today, let us allow the Word of God to show us that Jesus gives those He loves not little crumbs of love or mercy but the full loaf of life and redemption

2. What do we know about this woman?

A. First, she was a gentile.

1. She wasn't Jewish by religion or by birth.

2. More than likely she was a widow because no husband is mentioned.

3. Her daughter was suffering at the hands of demonic forces.

B. There is nothing more tenacious than a mother with a hurting child.

1. We find this mother willing to do anything and everything to find healing for her kid.

2. This included the loss of her pride as she begged Jesus to heal.

C. This mom falls at the feet of Jesus and begs for her daughter's healing.

1. If we were writing this, we would have Jesus immediately healing the kid without a second thought.

a. That is what He does in many other instances.

b. But He doesn't.

c. Instead, Jesus insults her.

2. Jesus' insult had a two-prong attack:

a. First, He said the children ate before the dogs:

1. In other words, He was telling her she was a gentile and not a Jew.

2. And everyone knew that the Messiah's ministry was to the Jew first.

3. Basically, Jesus told her that what He offered was only for His children and she wasn't one.

b. Then He says it isn't right to throw food away to give it to the dogs.

1. Dogs were not beloved pets but scavengers.

2. Not only is she a dog up until this point, but the Greek word used is "little dog".

3. Not something to fear, like a junk yard dog, but a little dog with no value.

4. Think about how demeaning this is!
 5. You and one you love is desperate for help and the only who can help you insults you to your face.
3. The reader is left with the question, WHERE IS THIS COMING FROM?
- a. Why is Jesus using demeaning language?
 - b. Why is Jesus insulting her like this?
 - c. **The answer is found in Matthew's version of this passage.**

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3. Jesus' harsh words were to show the heart of the disciples towards outsiders.

A. The previous passages in Mark dealt with the sinful attitudes of the Pharisees.

1. Jesus told them it was out of their hearts that came all sorts of sin and uncleanness.
2. This next pericope turns the attention on the disciples.

B. When you grow up being taught certain people were of lesser value, hatred takes root.

1. **Compassion and hatred cannot grow in the same heart.**
 - a. Either compassion will win or hatred.
 - b. You cannot be both a hateful person and loving person.
2. Jesus takes this opportunity to show how ridiculous and unloving their preconceptions of women and gentiles were.

C. In the eyes of the disciples, this woman was nothing more than a little dog.

1. They had no legal obligation to help her or talk to her.
 - a. In the Middle-East, women do not speak to another man.
 - b. And Gentiles did not approach a Jewish Rabbi.
2. In the eyes of the disciples, the response of Jesus was appropriate.
 - a. A few weeks ago, I quoted Ben Sirach as an example of the view of women.
 - b. **“Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; it is woman who brings shame and disgrace.”**
 - c. In other words, “Man can do no wrong, woman can do no right.”
 - d. **What Jesus was doing was taking the disciple’s ideas and prejudices to their extreme, yet, logical conclusion.**
 1. If she was nothing more than a dog,
 2. Then she had no right to ask Jesus for healing,
 3. And Jesus had no right to heal her.

4. You don't fix things that have no value and the daughter of a widowed gentile had no value in their world.

D. Jesus' words served two purposes:

1. To put on display the hearts of the disciples, and
2. To display the heart of the mother.
3. According to Mathew (who was one of the disciples at the time), this woman was nothing more than an inconvenience.
4. But the mom had no time for the prejudices of a group of men.
 - a. She had no time for protocol.
 - b. She had no time for niceties or pride.
 - c. Her little girl was desperate and in need of a Savior.

4. The Woman answered with incredible faith and understanding.

A. "Even the dogs under the table get to eat the crumbs".

1. Does this sound like a statement of faith to you?
 - a. To my ears, no.
 - b. But to Jesus' it did.
2. The woman didn't call Jesus names.
 - a. She didn't start a twitter campaign.
 - b. In fact, she recognized her position.

"At this stage therefore, a Gentile woman had no claim, as a Jewish woman would have had. She must realize that her only hope lay in the uncovenanted mercies of God."¹

3. She knew the culture thought her to be in the wrong.

¹ R. Alan Cole, [Mark: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 193.

a. She knew that she wasn't Jewish and had no claims to this Jewish rabbi before her.

b. Yet, she believed in the fundamental character of God:

c. She believed that standing before her was the loving and compassionate Son of God and that a "crumb" from Him would be enough to heal her daughter.

d. Her faith is expressed in her unfailing confidence in the person of Jesus as the agent of God's salvation for all, both Jew and Gentile. She confesses him as Lord and Master. A final, almost indefinable, element in that faith is her willingness to pay any price, even public humiliation, in order to receive the grace mediated by Jesus,²

B. Jesus never ignores faith.

1. When people step out in faith, God takes notice.

a. Faith is not the same as making uninformed decisions.

b. Faith is not taking huge risks for the sake of risk.

c. Faith is trusting that God will do what He declares He will do.

2. When people pray for healing, faith is exercised based on the promises of God in the Bible.

a. When people pray for forgiveness of sins, we are trusting that God will do what He said He would do.

b. The woman had heard of what Jesus had already done.

c. Her faith led her to push through her pride, the insults, and the cultural barriers because she KNEW that Jesus had healed others and would not refuse her.

² Kenneth E. Bailey, [*Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 225.

5. If Jesus would do this for her, imagine what Jesus will do for you?

A. Remember, that she was an outsider.

1. She had no claim to Jesus.
2. "God's abundance for his children was so rich that even the total outsider could share in it." ³

B. And the good news is that you are NOT an outsider.

1. The Word of God says that, in Christ, there is no longer Jew nor Greek, male nor female.
2. That means the old distinctions that separated people from the presence and ministry of God are no longer valid.
3. In Jesus, we are all His full children.
4. There are no step-children in the family of God.
 1. Jesus' love for you will never be more or less.
 2. You can't make him to love you any more than He does at this moment.
 3. The only label that matters in the Kingdom of God is "lost" and "found".

6. What God has for you is more than a little crumb.

A. The woman wanted just a "crumb" for Jesus and received her daughter's healing.

1. In Jesus, we don't receive crumbs we receive the whole loaf.
2. Think about what you have in Jesus:
 - a. Salvation

³ R. Alan Cole, [Mark: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 193.

- b. Healing
- c. Provision
- d. Presence and Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

3. These are not leftovers of Jesus' love for you but costly gifts of love and grace.

B. Today, let the Holy Spirit deal with your heart.

1. Some of you here today need to experience and know Jesus' love for you.

- a. You are not an afterthought.
- b. You are not forgotten.
- c. You are dearly loved and some of you need to experience that in your life today.
- d. If that is you, here in just a moment we want to pray with you to experience the love of Jesus and the gifts of love we have in Him.

2. Others of you have attitudes that need to be exposed to God's grace.

- a. You are full of hate, racism, bigotry, and other wrong attitudes.
- b. You know they are not compatible with the life of the Holy Spirit in you.
- c. And if that is you, let today's word challenge you like Jesus challenged His disciples.
- d. Jesus' will for your life is to spread compassion, not hatred.
- e. Some of us need to let Jesus change our hearts, and He wants to do that today.