

Mark 7:24-30 NCC 18/10/26

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 evil 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 their dogs.”

28 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but 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.

So continuing our way through Mark 7 we have had a great time seeing Jesus at work around Galilee. The whole region is a stir and now he leaves

And up to this point Mark has patiently been laying down who Jesus is. ***The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God***

And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

I’m not going to pick on every point but ***“Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7)*** Okay from the Pharisees lips but Mark puts it there for us to see

You are the Son of God, Mark 3 He stills the storm he ***treads the waves of the sea*** as He passes by, Mark 6 echoing the Lord God in Ex 33 and 1 Kings 19

Jesus is God, and more to come.

Now today, we see something which every Pharisee would shudder at, and I suspect the disciples as well.

Jesus leaves Israel, to check on the neighbours!

Now at this point he's already spoken to the woman at the well in Samaria, and remember from a Jewish perspective they were dismissed and look down on as half breeds.

Okay, that's not how we see them, it's not how Jesus saw them, but it's how Jews saw them, including the disciples at that point despised because of their DNA, but now he crosses the borders of Israel to the even more despised Gentiles!
Which is great because that's what we are!

1 A Spreading Gospel 24-26

24 Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre.

So to even touch a Gentile meant you became unclean. That was the general consensus. I say general consensus, maybe there were people who didn't think that way, and perhaps people did business especially along these border areas.
But that was generally the view.

Now actually there was nothing in the OT about touching a gentile making you unclean, once again it was probably from the tradition of the elders, man made rules and regulations added on.

And it kept at a distance those of whom the Scriptures said ***May God be gracious to us and bless us ... so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.***

But there's more. Matthew's account tells us she was a Canaanite.

When you read the Old Testament accounts in Joshua you will see that Joshua was commanded by God to wipe out the Canaanites. We did this when I first came and one or two, maybe more, found it really uncomfortable.

And let's be honest it's not the easiest book to read is it?

Yet if you remember when we looked at the accounts we saw that this was God's judgement upon them for their great wickedness.

And it's known from various archaeological sources that they were particularly wicked.

Of course if you struggle with that, well, it's a reminder of a greater judgement to come.

But we also saw that they didn't finish the job and 1400 years later here they are. Still idol worshippers. Indeed even to this very day their DNA is found among the Lebanese people.

What is it about Canaanites, they keep popping up in the Bible. Do you remember how Rahab the Canaanite the Jericho prostitute came to faith inside Jericho, and what's more she is an ancestor of the Messiah.

So, it's a surprise perhaps when he heads to Tyre. Tyre has been prophesied against in Scripture and now we find Rahab's descendant, Jesus, talking to another Canaanite woman.

Mark doesn't say the disciples were present but Matthew does.

He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.

Again we wonder, was it to spend some time alone with the disciples? Maybe this was to show the Messiah outside of Israel, the gospel for the nations. And is this a contact that Jesus had already made?

25 In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet.

Now I used to think that these events surprised Jesus but I don't think so. He knows exactly what is going on. And also, clearly word has already spread outside of Israel and some have recognised Jesus and the disciples.

So this woman takes her chance.

There was a lot against this woman

i) the first thing we've already mentioned, she was a gentile. Not bought up under the Jewish covenant. And almost certainly a worshiper of idols. She would probably have an idol at home that she prayed to. Did she pray sincerely, or was she doubting it all?

I've mentioned before about the post office I would clear at the end of my shift and they were hindus. Just above the parcels was an idol shelf. And a bottle of Flora olive oil next to it, that they would burn to this idol.

And this was her. I hope we appreciate the blessings of being bought up in a Christian country! For me a Christian home.

ii) She was a woman in a male dominated society. Women were often property so to even approach a man was probably not unheard of but perhaps unusual. The reason women have freedom is because the gospel put them on a par with men. We're different, but equal before God

iii) Satan was against her, her little daughter was somehow under a demonic influence. I'll be honest I have no idea how this happened.

What I do now at one time we were all under Satan's influence to a degree and set free by the power of the gospel.

But this is different. How did it happen? How did it manifest itself? The Bible doesn't say, was there some ceremony involved with an idol? No idea, we don't know, let's leave it there.

iv) We read from the Matthew account that the disciples were against her. Hardly surprising I guess for Jews at that time.

But perhaps most surprising it seems Jesus was against her, we'll see in a moment

Also let's look at this a bit more. How did she know who Jesus was? Well, it seems that word spread beyond the borders of Israel, no doubt there were soldiers who crossed borders and tradesman perhaps and the borders weren't closed like our borders today

So I think it's safe to assume that people from this region had heard of Jesus

And if you remember with Rahab she heard garbled stories about the God of the Hebrews in the wilderness and even in that limited manner, no scripture to read, just stories of this people in the wilderness and it produced faith in her ***"I know that the LORD has given this land to you"***

Faith was produced

So it would seem this other Canaanite woman gained faith through hearing the Word of God transmitted through stories of people who had spoken to people who were hearing about Jesus.

We have to be clear on this Romans 10:17 ***Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.***

Faith comes to people not by my witnessing it's through believing God's word. Clever and persuasive arguments may or may not help. God's word is what does it.

Of course we seek to witness, give out tracts but ultimately faith is believing God

-In Matthew she calls him Lord, now in Greek it can mean just sir or it can mean master or it can mean LORD as in Yahweh, God's name.

-And she calls Him Son of David, which again could just be your a great man, you're like that great king David of yours indeed, King David had great relations with Tyre back in the day

On the other hand this is a Messianic title that the disciples were just beginning to understand. Is she ahead of them? Has she already understood something that they are slowly beginning to understand

Such reverence from a Canaanite, it's sadly lacking today where Jesus is a swear word to many, but not here.

And of course such grace from Jesus to these rejected Canaanites, who truly is one of them. Rahab the Canaanite married Boaz, David's great grandad and Jesus is to quote the hymnwriter David's greater Son

She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

This outsider had Clearly she had learned what Jesus can do and grabs her opportunity

2 A Selective Gospel 27-28

And look at the reply

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 their dogs.”

Now some try to take the sting out of that by saying it was puppies, or a household pet rather than the wild packs of dogs which might be around. Maybe.

I’m not so sure that takes the offence away even if that is what is meant. I’m not so sure we’re meant to take away the sting or the insult out of this.

I think what’s going on here is that Jesus is testing the woman’s faith, do you really want me?

It’s a bit like what I said about parables; they put casual seekers off, oh yeah, great Ted Talk about farming methods and improving your yield!

I’ll definitely be more careful when I’m sowing.

You have to dig deeper, and here we see just that here, how serious are you about the Son of David?

He’s had enough of shallowness in Israel, will He find faith elsewhere? A Canaanite Gentile?

I reckon being called a dog would put many off. But not this lady.

Her faith was genuine in that she didn't give up at the first hurdle she persevered.

I've known too many people who start coming to Church out of genuine need, they draw near, they seem interested, we're all excited

But then they pull away. We've seen that haven't we?

Perhaps the need goes away, and they think they don't need God anymore, perhaps the need doesn't go away, pah, who needs God anyway! Needs sometimes draws people to God, sometimes they drive people from God

They don't persevere. Of course it might not be the last word on the matter, who knows.

And I've told you before about a young mum whose relationship was falling apart, if I remember they had put her and her two children in the roughest part of the roughest estate in Colchester so she started coming to Church.

Every Sunday she was there, she took a Bible from me. If memory serves, the older daughter came to our club, went out to Sunday School. She seemed so close. The trouble in her life drew her to Jesus.

Just before Christmas she was able to rent a house from a family member on a nice estate. After much prayer.

I think I possibly helped her move in. I can't remember. And that was it.

I think I got a HAPPY NEW YEAR text about a week later. Never came back.

What we thought was faith, wasn't. Oh it could have been, but the obstacle was one of full commitment to Jesus. Perhaps at the next trial she might try again more seriously.

But this woman pushes past the barrier.

This is not the first time a gentile has shown great faith, in Matthew 8 a centurion had a servant who was paralysed and he knew that Jesus could say the word from a distance to heal his servant.

Jesus said

8:10 ***I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel***

He was way ahead of the pack!

What does Jesus say

27 ***“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her.***

Oh yes, Jesus’ mission is firstly to the Jews. Indeed John 4:22 to a Samaritan lady ***salvation is from the Jews.***

John 1:11 ***He came to that which was his own,*** Jews, okay it goes on

but his own did not receive him.

But lady, wait your turn.

Actually he doesn’t even say that. You’re a gentile dog!

“for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”

Now. I guess many are concerned about Jesus’ language here, it seems so unkind.

Okay, if you want to think that, go ahead. The obvious thing is that it doesn’t bother the woman. And she comes back as sharp as anything

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

If you've had a dog you just know. Suzi would be fixed rigid, waiting for something to drop

But what a reply, she knows she's unworthy, she knows she deserves nothing, she's a Canaanite, her family should have been wiped out for heinous sins but please, give me a crumb! That's all I ask.

She pushes past the obstacle. And grace captures her.

There are often obstacles that stop us in our walk of faith. In a few weeks in Mark 10 we read

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

I wish people would ask that question more don't you? I would talk with them, give them one of these tracts perhaps, do a bit of Bible study and we would all get praying.

Jesus takes him through the commandments, he says I've obeyed them (I'm thinking yeah right)

Then he says ***"One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."***

Now I've never told anybody to do that, not once. But in doing so he reveals that he hasn't kept all the commandments he's broken the tenth, ***you shall not covet***. I'm not giving up my riches

He sets up a hurdle to the rich man's faith. Not because he wants to keep people out, rather he wants people to understand the commitment to follow Christ.

If you are serious about your faith would you do that? And he slinks away into the crowd. Okay, maybe there's a happy ending. We're not told.

I guess it's fair to say many times there are hurdles to cross, things that hold us back in our Christian walk.

Oh sometimes there are barriers that we shouldn't cross, things that God has placed in our way to keep us from harm. Don't go there, say no, walk away from people, situations if they won't help you follow Christ.

And of course we mustn't cross those barriers.

But Jesus wanted this dear woman to persevere, past the obstacle, beyond the hindrances and come out with a strong faith.

If we don't persevere we don't grow. If we don't cling on through the trials of life our faith doesn't grow

She said **yes Lord**

Mary said something similar ***Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.***

It can be very simple, and **obedience is what is called for**, just follow the Saviour

3 Faith rewarded 29-30

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

Hebrews 11, that great chapter of faith

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Now this isn't a silly blind faith, I will believe, I will believe.
The object of her faith is Christ, she is hoping in Christ to set her daughter free and her prayer is answered

Indeed we also read in the same chapter verse 6 ***And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.***

And this lady, I wish we knew her name! Did just that, a simple faith that believed God

And we see the authority of Christ
the demon has left your daughter

He didn't lay hands on her, did he ever meet the daughter? He just spoke and it was.

We see in this last verse ***30 She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.***

Now we can make a mistake here when we think if we believe enough for whatever we want then our prayers will be answered, name it claim it.

But that's not the lesson, that's not right. The lesson is that Jesus is worthy of our trust, have faith in Christ

Was this woman a believer, was this a saving faith? I think so.
Perhaps I can't be certain, but she came by faith, she believed God and I think that is a saving faith.

