

SERIES: **The Jesus Journey**

TEXT: **Mark 7:24-30**

TITLE: **Stretched Out Faith**

CONTEXT: Mark's theme of BREAD= Jesus

- Jesus fed the 5,000 outside Bethsaida bread – Jews
- The Pharisees accused His disciples of eating bread with unclean hands, Jesus corrects them
- Now in Gentile territory we are given another bread story
- From here, Jesus leaves and goes to feed the 4,000 with bread –in the Decapolis- Gentiles

Anyone from anywhere can come to Jesus, and Faith in Him will never disappoint

But this passage teaches us an important lesson, one we need to remember in these times-

Your faith will be tested...

In the OT, Jacob wrestled with the preincarnate Christ and refused to let Him go until He blessed him;
This woman is the NT counterpart to Jacob- her faith is tested, but she will not be turned away unblessed

Mark 7:24 He got up and departed from there to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but he could not escape notice.

Jesus is beyond the borders of Israel at this point- Besides the Egypt flight, this is the furthest away we have Him traveling on record

Matthew tells us Jesus withdrew to the area of Tyre and Sidon

These regions were originally part of what God had given to Israel as the promised land,
but they were never able to subdue it nor take possession of it.

Where they failed to enter into their inheritance, Jesus won't.

'...he could not escape notice' - Back in 3:8 people from this region had come to hear and see Him

Mark 7:25 Instead, immediately after hearing about him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at his feet.

We aren't given her name, but we are told of her faith-

She came immediately & she came in humility

True faith drives us to collapse at once at the feet of Jesus

Does my faith hesitate? You know what trust requires, but you delay...doubt

Is my faith entitled? We can come boldly before the throne of grace, but not arrogantly-
God owes us nothing

Mark 7:26 The woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she was asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

2 problems: the obvious one- her little daughter is tormented with a demon
 The not so obvious one- her identity

The woman's non-Jewishness is stressed twice; she's a gentile by birth and by culture

Tyre was a region in Phoenicia (modern day Lebanon) with a long history of antagonism against the Jews.

- It was the home of the OT queen Jezebel, wife of King Ahab
she was a princess of Sidon and daughter of the king of Tyre)- she was notoriously wicked, killed many of God's prophets and introduced pagan worship to the Israelites
- In the 2nd century BC, Tyre along with other city-nations, conspired against the Jews to eradicate them and their religion, (and almost did) which led to the Maccabean revolt
- The Jewish historian Josephus referred to the inhabitants of Tyre as *the Jews "bitterest enemies"*

That context helps paint just how revolutionary this encounter is- she is from 'the enemies' side!

Think in your context, what people you would consider to be so far and against God.

The ones everyone in your circle hates and for good reason!

We're about to see that, if grace can go into 'those' crowds, faith can arise from them also

'she was asking him'- Matthew in his account tells us she **'kept crying out'**

She kept asking, because Jesus didn't answer!

Matthew 15:23 Jesus did not say a word to her. His disciples approached him and urged him, "Send her away because she's crying out after us."

When the disciples see her persistence, they don't urge Jesus to hear her, but to send her away!

They don't have an issue with Jesus defending *them* before the Pharisees, but they still can't see that this woman is also worthy of mercy

They are guilty of buying in to the cultural rhetoric that certain people aren't worth God's time

A word to Christians in our current climate: DON'T SEND *THEM* AWAY

We know the disciples are a work in progress....but why would Jesus ignore her? What is He doing?

Jesus is little by little, drawing out her faith

True faith is strengthened when it is stretched

Think of it this way, your faith in God is like an unplanted seed

Then something happens (setback, sorrow, situation), and God's not answering.

Do you turn away and conclude He doesn't care?

Doors keep closing in your face- it's almost as if God is opposing you.

Do you turn away now?

Some do. But for those who stay trusting, their faith doesn't shrink, it expands more and more. By the time God answers, that little seed is a tree with much fruit.

God stretches our faith not only for our sake, but for the sake of those who watch us also

Finally Jesus responds to her, but it's not what you might expect

Mark 7:27 He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, because it isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Did Jesus just call this woman a dog?!yes.

- Not because she's a woman (B-word)

- 2 Greek words for 'dog': *Kuon* (just a word for dog- street dogs, scavengers)
Kunarium ('little dog'; a puppy/ pet/ house dogs)

Men wiser than me have argued in defense of Jesus and said He wasn't being offensive; I disagree.
While I believe He was definitely not degrading her humanity, and a pet is better than a stray- still a note of offense

The gospel is by nature offensive. You have to acknowledge you are a sinner.

But if you are willing to accept the offense, there is grace waiting on the other side.

But what did Jesus mean with this mini parable?

The nature of His mission- Jesus' mission was FIRST to Israel

Matthew gives us more context-

Matthew 15:24-26 He replied, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ He answered, "It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

The first time Jesus sends out the disciples-

Matthew 10:5-7 Jesus sent out these twelve after giving them instructions: "Don't take the road that leads to the Gentiles, and don't enter any Samaritan town. ⁶ Instead, **go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** ⁷ As you go, proclaim, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

The last time Jesus sends out he disciples-

Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ **Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,** baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

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

So that's what He meant, but why not just give her what she asks? He's done it for other non-Jews already in Mark

Jesus was using this moment to further test her faith- not so much for her sake, but for the disciples & ours

This moment teaches us that- **Testing reveals the quality of our trust**

When it seems as if Jesus will just pass her by, to our amazement, she presses in (as we'll see in a moment)

When God is testing our faith, it might feel like rejection, but it is refinement

Don't give up; keep the hope up

Mark 7:28 But she replied to him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

She is the first person in the book of Mark, who heard a parable from Jesus and understands!

The children= Israel; the little dog= Gentiles (non-Jews)

She doesn't reject Jesus' comparison of her to a little dog- she accepts it, and then takes it one step further!

If the dogs eat the crumbs under the table, they eat at the same time as the children.

Yes, this is a time of feasting for Israel, but there is more than enough for even the little dogs to eat!

This Syrophoenician woman's persevering faith is refreshing at this point in Mark

- It's a contrast to the Pharisees' lack of faith
- It's a contrast to the disciple's repeated lack of understanding
- It's a contrast to the identity she was born with- might be born a heathen, but will live to trust Jesus (her foremother Jezebels' pride vs her humility before God)

This woman stands in contrast to our culture of entitlement and canceling

She doesn't argue with Jesus- 'How dare you judge me!'

She doesn't demand from Him- 'You *have* to help me!'

She pleads for mercy and help to the only person she believes can give her both

Daniel Akin- *"...we are all dogs under the table with no rights whatsoever as members of the family. I acknowledge I don't deserve a place **at** the table but I believe there is enough even for me **on** the table. Just a few crumbs will be enough. That I believe. Then in amazing grace and mercy our Savior lifts us up no longer as a dog (sinner) but a child (saved), no longer under the table but now a member of the family at the table"*

Mark 7:29 Then he told her, "Because of this reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter."

Matthew gives us an important detail

Matthew 15:28 Then Jesus replied to her, "Woman, **your faith is great**. Let it be done for you as you want."

'great'- the Greek word is 'Megas' – her faith was tested and stretched, and was great

Mark 7:30 When she went back to her home, she found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

After unspoken torment for an untold number of days, finally, her little girl is able to rest and be calm

This mother could have walked away at the silence of Jesus. She could have stormed off at His words.

But instead, she pressed in with humility and persistence, and her faith was rewarded.

MAIN POINT: **Your faith will be tested, not to make you stumble, but to help you stand**

When your faith feels stretched, will you trust that He is strengthening you?

The Syrophoenician woman shows us that Jesus' table is wide enough for anyone—Jew, Gentile, outsider, enemy.

And if there is grace for her, there is grace for you.

So don't let the test turn you away. Let it press you closer.

Because **on the other side of a stretched faith, there is always a greater blessing.**

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

Tim Keller- *"On the cross the child of God was thrown away, cast away from the table without a crumb, so that those of us who are not children of God can be adopted and brought in. Put another way, the child had to become a dog so that we could become sons and daughters at the table."*

INVITATION

BULPEN-

Bernard of Clairvaux- *“And so when you perceive that you are being humiliated, look on it as the sign of a sure guarantee that grace is on the way. Just as the heart is puffed up with pride before its destruction, so it is humiliated before being honored.”*

JC Ryle *“She prays for one who could not pray for herself and never rests until her prayer is granted. By prayer she obtains the cure which no human means could obtain... where there is a praying mother there is always hope.”*

Where there is a praying church there is always hope.

I’ll tell you as I told our leaders ‘the world needs the church, and the church needs you’

There is not a single human being so unworthy that they cannot receive the blessing of Christ

In the first part of chapter 7 the issue was raised by the religious leaders against Jesus was that some people were too unclean to draw near to God.

This story and the one to follow are told in the backdrop of that- and the point is this,

Not only can anyone draw near to God, God will draw near to them

We are all beggars at the master’s table, unworthy to have a place at the table.

Psalms 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

It's very likely that she didn't understand the theological meaning of Jesus' parable (that He came first for Israel) because she wasn't familiar with Jewish prophecy, scripture, vernacular

But she did understand *something* about it- practical- this moment is for His disciples not her

If she understood the full meaning of the parable- she has more understanding than even the Pharisees and disciples do; if she doesn't understand the complete meaning, it's still astonishing because it means she was even more willing to be offended (dog) if it meant Jesus would grant her request

There are two possibilities to her understanding Jesus' words:

She comprehends the theological & scriptural significance

She understands the direct practical significance

she doesn't argue with Jesus

‘why do you call me that; why does Israel have to be first; why did this have to happen to my daughter’, etc.

instead, her cry of faith was “have *mercy* on me” IOW – I know I don't deserve anything from you

not demanding answers but requesting mercy

We must embrace the gospel in its fullness or not at all

The trial of her faith- silence, refusal, reproach

Some will stumble. Some will stand.

Adrian Rogers- “The trials that come from God are tailor-made.”

Her persistent faith was not the result of discipline; it was the result of desperation

James 1:2-3 Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

1 Peter 1:6-7 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials ⁷ so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding;

Genesis 18:18 Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.

Ephesians 2:11-13,19 So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands. ¹² At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁹ So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household

1 Peter 5:5b God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Psalms 138:6 Though the Lord is exalted, he takes note of the humble; but he knows the haughty from a distance.

Matthew 15:21-28 When Jesus left there, he withdrew to the area of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came and kept crying out, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely tormented by a demon.” ²³ Jesus did not say a word to her. His disciples approached him and urged him, “Send her away because she’s crying out after us.” ²⁴ He replied, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵ But she came, knelt before him, and said, “Lord, help me!” ²⁶ He answered, “It isn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she said, “yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus replied to her, “Woman, your faith is great. Let it be done for you as you want.” And from that moment her daughter was healed.

Romans 11:25-29 I don’t want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you will not be conceited: A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

²⁸ Regarding the gospel, they are enemies for your advantage, but regarding election, they are loved because of the patriarchs, ²⁹ since God’s gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable

John 6:37b ...the one who comes to me I will never cast out.

1 Corinthians 1:22-23 For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.