

**Matthew 15:21-28:** And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." <sup>23</sup> But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." <sup>24</sup> He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." <sup>25</sup> But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." <sup>26</sup> And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup> She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

**Intro:** The last Sunday we studied Matthew 15, Jesus was instructing us about how the heart matters to God and not outward appearance and washed hands. He warned us about heartless worship.

**God cares about the heart: 1 Samuel 13:14:** The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart . . .

**Jesus declared all foods clean: Mark 7:19:** Thus he declared all foods clean.

**O. T. Food Laws: Lev 11:7-8:** & the pig, because it parts the hoof & is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. You shall not eat any of their flesh, & you shall not touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you

These laws taught God's people about His holiness & their sinfulness & they separated God's people from the surrounding nations – the Jews were to be a holy nation set apart for God. For the Jews in the O. T., these food laws were a ceremonial & a moral category: they were not to eat unclean animals because God told them not to & to disobey God would be to sin. But in our passage, we see God Himself (Jesus) changing these food laws because He Himself is the fulfillment of these laws – He would truly make His people clean by His blood and righteousness. See also Peter's vision (Acts 10). These laws were given at a specific time to a specific people for a specific purpose: They were given to O. T. Israel to prepare a people, culture, and language to receive the Messiah of God – God in the flesh – Jesus Christ! Everything points to Christ! And He fulfills all the law and the prophets, and He's the only One Who can make us clean and undefiled from the inside out! He alone can cleanse our hearts and change our hearts!

Today we see a Gentile woman come to Jesus, a woman who was considered unclean because of her ethnicity & culture & background, but Jesus uses her to illustrate what He's been teaching – it's the heart that matters!

### **1. Jesus Goes To A Rejected Place**

**Matthew 15:21:** And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus leaves a primarily Jewish area and goes to the district of Tyre and Sidon, a primarily Gentile (non-Jew) area. This is the only time in Matthew's Gospel when Jesus goes to Gentile territory.

**Ligon Duncan:** the healing of the Syrophenician woman's daughter reminds us that Elijah the prophet had gone to, roughly, the same territory and worked a miracle for another heathen woman in 1 Kings 17. Zarephath is 8.5 miles south of Sidon, and 14 miles north of Tyre. Jesus didn't go to Tyre or Sidon, but to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Jesus has gone to the same territory where Elijah went. Why did Elijah go to this territory? Because there was a famine in Israel. In order to provide for him, God sends him to this widow in Zarephath for bread. Elijah asks a Gentile woman for bread. Elijah provides her bread to continue during the time of the famine and resurrects that widow's son. Jesus goes to the area of Tyre and Sidon, and a woman asks him for bread, and he saves her daughter from demon possession. Now, Jesus himself has already mentioned that story (Luke 4:24-26). Do you remember when the people in his own synagogue were skeptical of him? He uses the story of Elijah going to Zarephath and he says, "Look, there were a lot of widows in Israel that were hungry during the famine." But God sent Elijah only to the widow of Zarephath. There are a lot of lepers in Israel, but only Naaman the Syrian was cured." Jesus is clearly talking about the children rejecting the promises of God, and those promises being given to those who are not children. He's already got that in mind as he goes to Zarephath. These two towns of Tyre and

Sidon are closely linked together in the New Testament. This miracle of Elijah is clearly already in Jesus' mind because of Luke's account of his rejection at Nazareth. And Jesus is there giving clear warning of his coming mission to the Gentiles, using the widow of Zarephath as his illustration. In fact, if you turn to Luke 10:13-14, he will say, "You know what, if the miracles that I had done in your presence had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. And in fact, the judgment day will be better for them than they are for you." Tyre is the place from which Jezebel would introduce Baal worship into the northern kingdom. Josephus says, "Tyre was notoriously our bitterest enemies." And yet Jesus is deliberately going to this Gentile region and this Gentile woman in order to teach his disciples, and you and me, about his mission.

## **2. Jesus Meets A Desperate, Canaanite Woman**

**Matthew 15:22:** And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."

**a. She is a Canaanite woman:** Canaanites were the great enemies of God's people. **Articles:** They were a wicked, idolatrous people descended from Noah's grandson Canaan, who was a son of Ham (Genesis 9:18). Canaan was cursed because of his and his father's sin against Noah (Genesis 9:20-25). The Bible paints a pretty grim picture of Canaanite practices. Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain detailed and lurid lists including: the worship of demonic idols, taboo sexual acts, and even the sacrifice of children to the Canaanite gods.

**Ligon Duncan:** Jesus talks with a Greek-speaking Gentile, Syrian, Phoenician, Canaanite woman. How's that for intersectionality? If Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews, she was a Gentile of Gentiles. If ever someone was a Gentile in the flesh—the uncircumcision, separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in this world—it is this woman. And yet, Jesus is standing in front of her. The Messiah has come to her.

**b. She knows where to go for help:** She knows to go to Jesus! She knows He can help her! She cries to Jesus for mercy! Mercy is not getting what we deserve & getting what we don't deserve! She wants her daughter delivered!

**J. C. Ryle:** Hopeless and desperate as her case appeared, she had a praying mother, and where there is a praying mother there is always hope.

**Augustine:** [Monica] now gone from my sight, who for years had wept over me, that I might live in [God's] sight.

**c. She comes to the LORD:** In each of the three times she calls out to Jesus, she calls Him LORD! **GOSPEL!**

Think about the faith of this woman! She is a Canaanite; we are not told her name; everything is against her; yet she comes to Christ! And it gets worse for her because Jesus seems to ignore her and tell her He did not come for her and that it's not right for Him to help her and even calls her a dog, but she still comes! Oh dear Christian friend, how different is it for you! You have been brought near by the blood of Christ! You are a child of God! You will be given a new name! All things are working for your good! He sings over you! & will you not come to Him!

## **3. This Desperate Canaanite Woman Calls Jesus The Son Of David**

**Verse 22:** Son of David

**Romans 1:1-3:** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh

## **4. Jesus' Deafening Silence**

**Matthew 15:23:** But he did not answer her a word.

**a. One reason Jesus may have been silent is to emphasize what she just said: Verse 22:** Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

**b. Do you ever feel like God is silent toward you?** You want help; you want guidance; you've been praying for years for something, & it seems like heaven is silent? Keep praying; Keep trusting; Keep coming to Jesus like her!

### **5. The Disciples' Beg Jesus To Send Her Away**

**Matthew 15:23:** And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us."

Jesus' disciples seem annoyed by this woman! They want her to go away! Just go away or heal her so she will go!

**Dever:** I wonder if you ever find yourself valuing your convenience or comfort over other people & their needs?

### **6. Jesus Answers That He Didn't Come For Her But Only For Israel**

**Matthew 15:24:** He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Jesus says He wasn't sent for her! He says He didn't come for Canaanites! He only came for His people! (BHI's!)

- **Matthew 10:5-6:** These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

- **Romans 1:16:** 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.

### **7. The Woman Keeps Begging**

**Matthew 15:25:** But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Spurgeon preached 10 sermons on this text. He had one whole sermon on just this prayer: "Lord, help me!"

### **8. Jesus Says He's Being Asked For Bread**

**Matthew 15:26:** And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

The bread here is all the help Jesus the Messiah brings to His people: including physical & spiritual healing.

### **9. Jesus Says It's Not Right For Him To Help Her**

**Matthew 15:26:** And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

**Genesis 18:25:** Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

**Exodus 3:10:** Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

### **10. Jesus Calls Her A Dog**

**Matthew 15:26:** And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Jesus calls her the derogatory name that Jews called all Gentiles. Dogs are unclean; dogs are unchecked in their desires and appetites: **Revelation 22:15:** Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

**Ligon Duncan:** And by the way, aren't you glad that Peter was not live tweeting this? Jesus would have gone viral in the worst of ways. There would have been an almost infinite thread of rage tweets about his heartlessness and racism and misogyny. Nevertheless, she persisted.

**1) We are all dogs:** Because of our sin, we're all unclean; because of our sin we give in to our desires & appetites!

**2) This is God speaking:** Jesus is God, & He has the right, power, wisdom, & knowledge to call us what we really are: **Psalm 49:12:** Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.

In the apparently harsh way Jesus first spoke with this woman, I believe He was testing her. Like God tested Job to put Job's relentless faith and patience on display, I think Jesus was putting this woman's faith on display as well. And through this test or trial, He drove her to Himself all the more and blessed her! Do you see your trials in life this way – as means by which Jesus loves you by driving you to Him and making you more like Him?

### **11. The Woman's Faith And Humility**

**Matthew 15:27:** She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

**R. C. Sproul:** Notice how many times in the Bible when people come before the living God, they identify themselves with the lowest forms of life or of animals: **Psalm 73:22:** I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.

**a. This woman's faith is a "Yes Lord" faith:** It's a faith that says whatever Jesus says and commands is good and right and I say "Yes Lord" to it no matter how hard it sounds! No matter how hard the circumstances; No matter how hard it is for me to follow Him in what He's calling me to do; No matter how impossible what He's calling me to do seems – we must say "Yes Lord" if we are His true disciples. And He will grant us the grace to do this.

**b. This woman's faith is a humble faith:** Notice Jesus calls her & her daughter a dog, & she is not offended & stand up for her supposed rights! She takes the name dog! Yes Lord, I'm Your little dog! This is the heart humility Jesus has been teaching about & rebuking the Jewish religious leaders about because they don't have this humility!

The word for "dog" in this passage is what's called the diminutive form, which means it's a small dog or little dog. I don't think this changes the harsh nature of Jesus use of "dog" because the diminutive form is used all over this story in Mark's version of this same story:

Mark 7:25: Little daughter; Verse 27: Little dogs; The woman's reply in verse 28: "Yes, Lord; yet even the [little] dogs under the table eat the [little] children's [little] crumbs."

**D. A. Carson:** There may be no significance to the use of the diminutive "dogs" . . . because in Hellenistic Greek the diminutive force is often entirely lacking; but if there is such a force here, it does not make the dogs more acceptable – [for example] "pet dogs" or "house dogs" as opposed to "wild dogs" - but more dependent . . . little, helpless dogs . . . If there is significance to the diminutive, I think it points to humility.

Notice the daughter is little; the dogs are little; the children are little; and the crumbs are little, but what's not little? Who can't be hidden at the beginning of this story? Usually things that can't be hidden are big! Jesus can't be hidden! Jesus is big!

It's good when we view ourselves as little and Jesus as big. When we become so little that we forget about us, and Jesus becomes so big that He can't be hidden from all our thoughts, desires, hopes and dreams and actions – then we are truly humble. So let's all be little dogs for glory of King Jesus!

And this woman knows that because Jesus is so big, one of His little crumbs can satisfy all her desires.

**c. Notice this woman has a relentlessly, desperate faith:** She was desperate because of her daughter's condition and because of her love for her daughter. **Genesis 32:26:** Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Do you see your desperate condition in your sin, and do you have love for Jesus, the merciful Savior? May this

drive you to flee to Christ as well!

**J. C. Ryle:** Let us mark this well. There is nothing which shows our ignorance so much as our impatience under trouble. We forget that every cross is a message from God, and intended to do us good in the end. Trials are intended to make us think – to wean us from the world, to send us to the Bible, to drive us to our knees. Health is a good thing; but sickness is far better, if it leads us to God. Prosperity is a great mercy, but adversity is a greater one, if it brings us to Christ. Anything, anything is better than living in carelessness, and dying in sin. Better a thousand times be afflicted, like the [Canaanite] mother, and like her flee to Christ, than live at ease, like the rich "fool," and die at last without Christ and without hope. (Luke 12:20.)

**Elizabeth Prentiss:** Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest; Now Thee alone I seek, give what is best. This all my prayer shall be: More love, O Christ to Thee; More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

- Let sorrow do its work, come grief or pain; Sweet are Thy messengers, sweet their refrain,  
When they can sing with me: More love, O Christ, to Thee; More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

**d. This woman's faith is in the only Person Who can save:** She knew Who to come to for help. Jesus is the only One Who could help this woman and cast the demon out of her daughter, and He's the only one Who can save you from your sins. This is true because a man once cried out to God like this woman over and over again, but God would not listen. **Remember Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane? . . . Jesus died to save sinners from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation! This is one of the main points of this story!**

**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 could 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. And because Jesus identified like that with us, now we know why we can approach him. The Son became a dog so that we dogs could be brought to the table; he became mute so that our tongues can be loosed to call him King. Don't be too isolated to think you are beyond healing. Don't be too proud to accept what the gospel says about your unworthiness. Don't be too despondent to accept what the gospel says about how loved you are.

Are the circumstances in your life overwhelmingly against you? Do you feel like Jesus is hiding Himself from you? Do you feel like God is telling you that you are not one of His children? Do you sense Jesus is saying it would not be right for Him to help you? Do feel like Jesus is even being insensitive and unloving toward you because He won't give you what you so desperately desire? Look at this woman and imitate her faith!

## **12. Jesus Passionately Praises Her Faith And Answers Her Prayer**

**Matthew 15:28:** Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Jesus commended no one else for having great faith!

**Spurgeon:** Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying [hidden] faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire, His eyes caught its glitter. If there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns, He failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus! At the sight of it, "the king is held in the galleries," and cries, "you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman's faith and watching it and delighting in it, He resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might, each one, flash its brilliance and delight His soul! Therefore He tried her faith by His silence and by His discouraging replies, that He might see its strength. But He was, all the while, delighting in it and secretly sustaining it. And when He had sufficiently tried it, He brought it forth as gold, and set His own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will."

**MacArthur:** you need to know what saving faith looks like, & this is it. It is humble. It is broken. It is desperate. It is penitent. It is reverent. It is respectful, & it is persistent. It just can't be discouraged. It can't be dissuaded.

**Jesus Put This Woman To The Test, Brought Out Her Best, Healed The Possessed, And Made The Outcast His Guest – God's Glory To Forever Express!**

Jesus entered a house and wanted to stay hidden  
Even from all the bedridden and those with devils stricken  
This evil's in the world because Adam ate the forbidden  
And because of this sin the whole world he'd sicken  
But the Second Adam came on that cross to be smitten  
And rise from the dead just as it was written  
So the vilest of sinners could still be forgiven  
To this woman He'd finally listen  
Her faith won't let His mercy stay hidden  
And her humility His stern reply has overridden!

Like Job, Jesus put this woman warrior to the test  
He didn't do this to make her life stressed or depressed  
But in love to make her faith shine as He pressed  
Jesus brought out her best while on a loving, mercy-heart quest  
And by faith in His righteousness alone she'd be dressed  
He graciously granted her humble request  
And healed her daughter from all that oppressed  
If like this woman you want to be blessed  
Humble yourself and don't stick out your chest  
Trust Him alone and with all that He is be impressed  
He'll always grant you what's best and give you everlasting rest!

Pleading with Jesus she wouldn't relent  
Her desires persisted for His consent  
With His blessing alone she'd be content  
Her faith wouldn't submit but bowed to the humblest extent  
Her place as a dog she wouldn't resent  
But answered "Yes Lord!" without dissent  
She would trust Him no matter what He meant  
For she believed His only good, loving intent  
And her great faith would cause His heart to assent  
And put an end to her horrific torment!

She didn't mind being little  
Her ego's not that brittle  
Her joy it didn't whittle  
She followed her Savior's transmittal  
When His face was marred with spittle  
Before He died for her acquittal  
And showed His life was all committal!

Jesus can't be hidden from plain sight  
He's the not little One of Whom Matthew would write  
He's God come to earth to make all wrongs right  
Yet He became little as a man contrite

And died on that cross as the sin God would smite  
Now risen He reigns as the Master of might!

What makes all the difference is the object of your trust  
Your faith can be weak, but if on Jesus your hopes are thrust  
You'll never walk away in disgust  
But Christ will be your holy lust  
In this short life He's your only MUST  
Hidden with Him all your dreams are robust  
They'll never turn to dust or be tarnished by rust  
So put your faith in Him Who's never unjust!

He welcomes the outcasts from every nation  
All peoples and races both southern and Haitian  
He'll make you His guest without reservation  
From all tribes and tongues He grants salvation  
To join His family there's one stipulation  
Repent and believe, and He'll start reformation  
You'll find in Him everlasting liberation, meditation, fascination, and jubilation  
Can I get an amen affirmation?!

One of Christ's crumbs is better than all you could dream  
It's better than the whole world and how great that might seem  
He's better than her in all her beauty gleam and love steam  
You see, Christ Himself is the Bread of Life Supreme  
"Christ is all!" is what you most desperately need and not self-esteem  
For we already esteem ourselves to the extreme  
Jesus came to save us from our self-centered scheme  
He died on that cross our lives to redeem  
And rose from the dead setting up His regime  
Repent and believe to live the dream  
You'll forget yourself and have Christ-esteem  
And enjoy Him with satisfaction you've never seen  
As God's glory more and more becomes your only theme!

Christ Has Mercy On Every Nation  
A Canaanite Who Earned Damnation  
She Cried For Mercy And Salvation  
From David's Greater Son Relation  
At First He Tests, Silent Duration  
Disciples Beg "Away Vexation!"  
He's Come For Only Israel's Nation  
But She Still Begs In Faith Prostration  
He Calls Her Dog Humiliation  
"It's Not Right" Is His Quotation  
Her Cries Won't Cease There's No Cessation  
"I Am Your Dog Oh Master Of Creation!"  
"Please Heal My Daughter And End Her Devastation!"  
Because Of Her Faith He Answered Her Supplication  
And Went On To Die And Rise For Our Justification  
He Is Forevermore Our Mercy Giving Emancipation!