

Introduction

1. According to Mark's narrative, Jesus at this point departs from Galilee, which has been His primary place of ministry thus far.
 - a. Last week we began a new section of Mark (Mk 7:1-8:26) in which Mark shared more of Jesus' teaching and His ministry among the Gentiles.
 - b. Last week, Jesus taught the Jews in Galilee about the importance of what is in one's heart. Unclean actions come from an unclean heart, and godly actions come from a clean heart (cf., Mk 7:1-23).
 - c. James Brooks notes, "If the proper inference from the teaching of Jesus in 7:1-23 is that all foods are clean (v. 19), the lesson to be learned from 7:24-30 is that all people are clean! . . . [Mark] saw in the ministry to the woman a preview of the Gentile mission and in the response of the woman a preview of the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles. Mark's Gentile readers/hearers no doubt found in the account reassurance that they were part of the true people of God" (James Brooks, *Mark*, 120).
 - d. This week and the next two weeks, we will consider Jesus as a helper of Gentiles (cf., Mk 7:24-8:9).
 - e. This section of Mark is the only excursion of Jesus outside the region of Palestine into the heart of Gentile territory.
 - f. Warren Wiersbe comments, "This is the only recorded instance of our Lord actually leaving Palestine. He was practicing what He had just taught the disciples: There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, for all are sinners and need the Savior" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 92).
2. Have you ever just wanted to get away from it all? Have you ever just wanted to fade into the background and not be the center of attention?
 - a. I think dealing with the changes and restrictions necessary to face and overcome the pandemic over the past year plus has stressed us all.
 - b. Yet again, we are experiencing a spike right now that has us moving backward instead of forward.
 - c. Sometimes, I feel like I just want to get away to a beach or a remote mountain top and relax.
 - d. I think this is how Jesus and His disciples must have felt after their intense time of teaching, healing, and dealing with critics.
 - 1) Jesus had been trying to get away on a retreat for rest with His disciples twice already (cf., Mk 6:30-34, 53-56), but both times he was interrupted by the pressing needs of others.
 - 2) This time Jesus led His disciples out of Galilee and into the region of Tyre for a time of rest and private teaching but once again he is interrupted in this far off place.
3. **Read Mk 7:24-30.**

A. Jesus Leaves Galilee for Gentile Territory (24)

1. Jesus left "that place" which in context was somewhere in Galilee, most likely on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee not far from Capernaum.
2. Jesus made a long journey northwest from Capernaum about forty miles to the region of Tyre.
 - a. It unlikely that He went into the City of Tyre itself, but He did go with His disciples into a house for rest.
 - b. Tyre was in a region different from Galilee. It was inhabited by few Jews and mostly Gentiles.
 - c. Today Tyre is a city in the country of Lebanon.
3. Daniel Akin comments about Tyre and Sidon, which were two great Phoenician cities ". . . inhabited by pagan Gentiles, and the region had a long history of opposition to Israel. This had been the home of Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31-32). Both Ezekiel (ch. 26) and Zechariah (ch. 9) prophesied against her" (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 159).
4. Remember that a delegation from Tyre and Sidon had come to see and hear Jesus (cf., Mk 3:8). Jesus was known far and wide even in Gentile lands.



B. A Gentile Woman Makes a Request of Jesus (25-26)

1. A woman in the region of Tyre had heard about Jesus' presence and certainly knew about the miracles that He had worked, especially His ability to cast out demons.
2. This woman's "little daughter" (Gk., *thugatrion*) was possessed by an "impure spirit" (Gk., *pneuma akatharton*).
 - a. Jesus had dealt with many impure/unclean spirits and had cast them out (cf., Mk 1:23-26, 3:11, 5:2-17) and had even given His disciples power over unclean spirits (cf., Mk 6:7).
 - b. Jesus had healed the "little daughter" of Jairus, the Jewish synagogue ruler in Capernaum (cf., Mk 5:22-24, 35-43).
 - c. Now this woman asked Jesus to cast out an impure spirit from her little daughter. She had faith and knew He could do it if He would.
3. Like Jairus (cf., Mk 5:22) and the woman with an issue of blood whom Jesus healed (cf., Mk 5:33) this woman fell (Gk., *prosepesen*) at Jesus' feet as a sign of her reverence for Jesus, her grief over her daughter's demon possession, and her respect for Jesus' power.
4. The woman was a "Greek" meaning that she was culturally Hellenized. She had been born in "Syrian Phoenicia," so ethnically she was a Gentile and not a Jew. She was a local who most likely had been born and raised right there in the region of Tyre.
5. The Gentile woman "begged" (Gk., *hrota*) Jesus to cast the demon (Gk., *daimonion*) out of her little daughter and waited for Jesus' response.

C. Jesus Responds to Her Request (27-30)

1. For us, Jesus' response at first hearing seems uncharacteristically harsh and uncaring—almost a rebuff and refusal of her request.
 - a. Jesus replied to her entreaty by saying, "First let the children eat all they want . . . for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs" (27).
 - b. Does Jesus equate the Syro-Phoenician woman and perhaps all Gentiles with dogs?
 - 1) The Pharisees certainly equated Gentiles with dirty, scavenger, street dogs.
 - 2) However, the word that Jesus used here for dog (Gk. *kunarion*) is different than expected. It does not refer to a street dog but to "a little dog; a puppy; a pet."
 - 3) In context, Jesus' use of the word is not as harsh as it first appears.
 - 4) Wiersbe comments, "Jesus spoke about feeding the children (Israel) first and not throwing their food to 'the little pet puppies.' Jesus was not calling the Gentiles 'dirty scavenger dogs' as did many of the proud Jews; He was giving her hope, and she took hold of it" (Wiersbe, 93).
 - c. What Jesus says can be seen as a short parable, a teaching statement, about the priority of His ministry among the Jews.
 - 1) Remember, this is the only time in Jesus' life that He ministered outside the region of Palestine, which was predominantly inhabited by Jews.
 - 2) Jesus' first priority was to reveal God's plan to the Jews, God's chosen people. Eventually, that plan would be revealed to Gentiles as well.
 - 3) Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, expressed a similar attitude in Ro 1:16— "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."
 - 4) Jesus' words do not imply a lack of care and concern for the Gentiles but the priority of His ministry to the Jews.
 - d. The image of Jesus' statement is of course absurd. Certainly, a loving father would not feed even pet dogs before he fed his own children. Likewise, God would not meet the needs of Gentiles before He first met the needs of the Jews, His chosen people, His children.
2. The woman had a quick wit and gave a good reply turning Jesus' own words back to Him with this excellent response, "Lord, . . . even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (28).
 - a. She was not asking for a special favor just some "crumbs" (Gk., *psychion*) from the children's table.
 - b. She did not deny the priority of Jesus' ministry to the Jews, she simply wanted a little of His healing power for her demon-possessed little daughter.

- c. Wiersbe writes, “There were many obstacles in her way, yet she overcame them all by faith and got what she needed. To begin with, her nationality was against her. She was Gentile and Jesus was a Jew. Besides that, she was a woman, and society in that day was dominated by men. Satan was against her, for one of his demons had taken control in her daughter’s life. The disciples were against her; they wanted Jesus to send her away and let Him (and them) have some rest. For a time, it looked as though even Jesus was against her! It was not an easy situation, and yet she triumphed because of her great faith . . . She accepted her place, she believed His Word, and she persisted in her plea, and Jesus not only met her need, but commended her for her faith” (Wiersbe, 92-93).
3. Jesus was impressed with her reply.
 - a. Mark recorded that Jesus responded to her good reply by saying, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter” (29).
 - b. In Matthew’s account of this encounter Jesus’ commendation of her faith is even stronger: “Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed at that moment” (Mt 15:28).
 - c. The woman’s reply was one of humble faith.
 - d. She had more faith in Jesus and the true source of His power than did the powerful Jewish leaders who had just interrogated Jesus (cf., Mk 7:5).
4. The woman went home and found her child lying on her bed at peace. The demon was gone. (30)

D. Reflections

1. It does not matter who you are or what you have done in the past, you can come before God with your needs. Come first asking for the forgiveness of your sins in Jesus Christ.
2. Like Jesus, we must be willing to go and minister to all people, especially those who are not like us!
3. Jesus comes to help and heal all people, Jews and non-Jews alike. God is no respecter of persons.
4. God is always faithful and honors human faith with a faithful response.
5. Your faith will triumph as you accept your place in God’s kingdom, believe His Word, and continue to cry out to God for forgiveness and help.
6. What do you need—not just want but truly need? What obstacles are in your way of getting what you need? How will you take a stand in faith with God against those obstacles and trust in God’s providential love to supply all you need and more?
7. Wiersbe concludes, “Great faith is faith that takes God at His Word and will not let go until God meets the need. Great faith can lay hold of even the slightest encouragement and turn it into a fulfilled promise. ‘Lord, increase our faith’” (Wiersbe, 93).