



A Mother's Encounter with Mercy

Series: Encounter

Sunday May 9th, 2021

Mark 7:24-30 (ESV) ([Matthew 15:21-28](#)) And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. ²⁵ But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, *a Canaanite woman from that region* a Syrophenician by birth. And she *came out and was crying* begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”* *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.”* He answered, *“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* *But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.”* ²⁷ And he said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁸ But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.” *Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.* ²⁹ And he said to her, *“O woman, great is your faith!”* “For this statement you may go your way; *Be it done for you as you desire.*” the demon has left your daughter.” *And her daughter was healed instantly.* ³⁰ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

No rest to be found

Jesus was attempting, at least for the third time, to find a place of rest from the crowds who wanted to be healed and the religious leaders who were looking for conflict.

Mark 6:32-34 (ESV) And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Mark 6:53-56 (ESV) When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. ⁵⁴ And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him ⁵⁵ and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

In Mark 7:1-13 Jesus is confronted by the religious leaders who are more concerned with the disciples ceremonially washing their hands than the miracles Jesus is performing among the people.

To their concern Jesus replies and I paraphrase: *It's not what goes into a person that makes him unclean but what comes out of the heart.*

Breaking away

Mark 7:24-30 (ESV) And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden.

Tyre and Sidon was a Mediterranean seaport city in Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) about 40 miles northwest of Capernaum.

Jesus is trying to get away but, his fame preceded him even among the gentiles.

A desperate mother

Mark 7:24b-25 (ESV) And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. ²⁵ But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

The last time person in Mark that came and fell at the feet of Jesus to plead for his daughter was Jairus. The contrast between the two couldn't be clearer. Jairus was the president of a Jewish synagogue, while this woman whose name isn't even mentioned was a gentile.

In the culture that they find themselves this woman had the most going against her from a Jewish perspective. The way she is described by Mark and Matthew reads like a description of disqualification. A woman, a Canaanite, historically enemies of Israel, from the infamous pagans of the Syrian Phoenicians.

Despite her notorious disqualifications she doesn't shrink back from pleading with Jesus. Deep down inside she knows something about Him that the rest of His team still doesn't yet understand.

Jesus sees human need above human status.

Her faith is set not in the desperation of her plea but in the depth of His love and mercy.

This mother has no claim to the credits that a good Jew would have to bring to Jesus. The only thing she has to bring is her desperate need and her persistent faith in, the only one who could save her daughter from a life of torment.

This is not the first time that a gentile finds themselves in need of a miracle of deliverance. In chapter 5 he had delivered the man in Gadara who had a legion of demons.

Why then does it seem that Jesus is reluctant to deliver the daughter of a desperate gentile Canaanite woman? Why does he use such a harsh metaphor? "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

I believe that Mark included this story in his gospel account, not to show the Jesus was unwilling to heal the gentiles but to point to His strong affirmation of being open to the Gentiles.

Dealing with a heart attitude

Is it possible that the issue wasn't the woman's race but the heart of his disciples that he was dealing with?

Matthew 15:23 (ESV) 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."

Maybe the disciples saw the reluctance of Jesus to give her an audience or to hear her plea for mercy as a sure sign that, she was not deserving of a miracle because of her racial makeup.

After all, even she was pleading for mercy. She knew something about her request. She was not a Jew and therefore didn't have a legal religious right to expect an answer.

But she had to have heard about the miracles Jesus had done and, perhaps even what he had done for the man of Gadara, a gentile who had a legion of demons.

An appeal to Jesus' heart and mission

Her faith was not in her qualifications but in His heart of compassion and mercy.

Matthew 15:22b "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."

She referred to Him in Messianic term. The Savior, the deliverer.

Faith isn't placed on our qualifications, it is placed in our Savior and deliverer.

It seems as if Jesus is ignoring her but, was he really? As we can see in the end He did heal and deliver her daughter.

It seems as if Jesus' actions were meant not, to disqualify her but, to encourage her to tap into the mercy she needed from the only one who could show it to her.

What can we learn from this desperate mother?

- **Love** – her love for her daughter drove her to seek the audience of someone she knew.
- **Persistence** – like a pit bull she wasn't going to let go of her asking. She was firmly planted in a course of action in spite of difficulty.
- **Humility** – she understood the metaphoric language Jesus was using. His word did not insult her. If anything, she was quick to respond to respond with wit.

She had enough understanding to admit that she had no right to expect to partake of the bread (covenant blessings) that belonged to the children, but all she wanted was a crumb, an act of mercy for her little girl.

Basically, she response was: Jesus I know you are not obligated to do this for me and I do not have the covenantal right to claim this blessing, but with you there is plenty of mercy to go around.

- **Faith** – she was firmly persuaded that Jesus could deliver her daughter.
- **Mercy** – she attained mercy from the Lord of Mercy.

Jesus response says it all:

And he said to her, "*O woman, great is your faith!*" For this statement you may go your way; *Be it done for you as you desire.*" the demon has left your daughter." *And her daughter was healed instantly.*³⁰ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

She didn't deserve mercy, she didn't earned mercy, she didn't work for mercy. She believed in the only one who could show mercy.

Jesus is the Savior and deliverer!