



Genuine Faith on Display

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Mark 7:24-30

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²⁴ 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 Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 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." ²⁹ And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

(Pastor prays)

This is not a very long passage. It is an unusual one. If you're a preacher, you read that and you think, *I'm not sure what to do with that*. You'll see what I mean when we go through it. A year ago this week, I was with a group of people from Hickory Grove. We were in the United Kingdom. I know it was a year ago because *Facebook* gives you memories. Which, if you've been on *Facebook* very long, you see all of these memories, some of them good, some of them bad. Some of them are pictures you wish you had never posted. So, *Facebook* showed up and told me that, a year ago, we were in London, England. On the first day of that trip, we went to the British Museum. Have you ever been to the British Museum? I had not. It was my first time. The British Museum has the largest, most expansive display of historical artifacts in the world. We spent a few hours there but you could spend a month in the

British Museum and still not plumb the depths of the historical riches. One of the things that caught my eye and that I was most fascinated with was in a prominent display case. They were the artifacts from the Sutton Hoo burial ship. Nobody really knows who that was. Was that a king's burial? There were all kinds of gold coins and swords and belt buckles. It was discovered in 1939. This dig provides a little bit of a window into the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries of Anglo-Saxon England. At that time, the island country was turning once again away from paganism and slowly toward Christianity. That dig shows the pivot. There it is on display in the British Museum to remind us, and to remind all of England's citizens, where they came from. In a similar fashion, the man named Mark—who wrote this book and got his information from Peter—is writing to Christians in Rome, Greek-speaking Christians, that have no Jewish background. He's reached into his story and he's given us something: a narrative of an unnamed woman. And he's telling his Roman readers that this religion is not just for Jews, it's also for Gentiles.

This story is puzzling. I've been wrestling with it all week. I've read it front-ways and back-ways and every kind of way you could come up with. It's a puzzling story that Mark has put here for us to read in his narrative. Matthew has it too. He tells it in a Jewish way. Mark tells it in a very Gentile way. This nameless Pagan woman and her remarkable encounter with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So you know that when you come upon a story like this, you start asking questions. What do you do with this? Why did Mark put this story here? Why is it in chapter seven? Why is it here, at this point in the narrative? What is he trying to tell us about Jesus? What is he trying to tell us about this woman? What is he trying to tell us about ourselves? What does this say about the gospel? Why has God given this to us on a Sunday morning at 8:00 AM? Look, if you chose to come to the 8:00 AM service this morning, be glad because it's going to start raining about noon. People start looking at their watches when the rain starts falling, but I can just keep preaching. Why did God put this here? What are we supposed to learn? It's like Mark has lifted up this woman to say, *Look, look at her*. We are reminded that

Faith in Jesus is Never Wasted

Let's go back to the story. Let's just go through it. It's not very long. Let's just pick out a few of the facts and look at them and then come back and maybe make some application. I'll have two points to make when we get done. Granted, one of those points has lots of sub-points, but it's only two points. Join me back in the story in verse 24. *"...and from there he arose."* From where, we don't know. Maybe Peter's house, possibly Capernaum, but He needed to get away. There He arose, and He went away on a retreat. It is interesting that Jesus goes into a Pagan land for His retreating. He went to the region called Tyre and Sidon. It's two old cities in an old region. We see it several times in the Old Testament. Jezebel is from there. Josephus tells us they're ancient enemies of Israel, Tyre is. In Acts chapter 12, that's where Herodias is struck dead. This is where Jesus goes to get away from everybody. Maybe people won't know Him there.

But Mark tells us in chapter three that people have started talking about Him. He went into somebody's house. We don't know whose house it is. He goes into a house and He didn't want anybody to know, yet He couldn't be hidden. There's a woman there in town. We don't know her name. She is a desperate woman. Verse 25 tells us that this woman—whose little daughter had an unclean spirit—immediately goes to Jesus. She does not have a Jewish background, she has a Pagan background. She worshipped Pagan gods. Her daughter is filled with this unclean spirit, and she doesn't know what to do. But she's heard the tales of Jesus. So she goes to where He is, and she falls down. The King James used to translate it as "she worshipped." We get a little description from Mark for his readers. Remember there is an audience that got this for the first time. They are living in Rome, where they have a church; they don't have a Jewish background. And here is Mark telling the Gentile believers that they were a part of the plan from the beginning. Here's a foreshadowing of God reaching the Gentiles. So he tells them in verse 26, *"Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth."* What does that mean? So, Phoenician means that it's in Lebanon. In Lebanon, but it's controlled by Syria.

So, *Syrophoenician*. That's her region, by birth. We know she's a Gentile—that is, she's speaking Greek. She has no Jewish background. She is Syrophoenician by birth. *"And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter."* If you ever had a child that's strayed, or if you ever spend any time praying for someone, you know the burden. When you have a sick child, you feel that burden of this woman regardless of her religion. And she begged Jesus to cast the demon out. Now I've been puzzled all week by this next verse. Why would Jesus talk like this to this woman? Any way you cut it, it's insulting. *"And he said to her, 'Let the children be fed first.'"* He's obviously talking about the Jews—about Israel. He is the Messiah, the Jewish Messiah. He has come to fulfill all of the Jewish Scriptures. Even Paul will say in 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 Gentiles."* So, here in Mark, Jesus says 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."* There's no way that's not insulting—any way you stack it. I've looked at lots of commentaries, and there are people trying to say that He isn't being insulting, He didn't use the bad word for a dog. There are two words for dog in Greek, and He didn't use the one word that would mean this feral, junkyard dog that you might find at the dump. There is another word that means something like a house pet. I mean, that maybe takes some of the poison out, but it's still not an uplifting thing. He is being clear that there are God's chosen people, and she's outside of those chosen people. Jesus is saying, I've come as Messiah to fulfill what God has planned all along. And then, her answer is a confession of faith. The woman said in verse 28, *"Yes, Lord."* This is the first time, and only time in the entire Gospel of Mark, that a person will ever call Jesus *Lord*, and it is this woman.

There's no way to interpret what Jesus said without it having at least some derogatory meaning. *"But she answered him, 'Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'"* There's enough bounty on God's table that when the children are eating and the crumbs drop down, the dogs underneath are getting some of that bounty. *Yes, Lord*. Even they get to eat.

And Jesus said to her that, for this statement—for this confession of faith, the fact that you’ve jumped over these hurdles—you may go your way, and, instantaneously, her daughter was healed. Don’t you wonder, *When did it happen?* This is the only long-distance healing in the entire book of Mark. It is the only time where Jesus healed someone from a long distance, and that’s remarkable. And what else is remarkable about this is that we don’t even know when it happened. He just thought it. It’s remarkable to me. “And he said to her, *‘For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.’ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.*” That’s remarkable.

So, I want to take a look at this woman because she obviously has been put in front of us to be on display. Mark is lifting her up and saying, Look at her faith. I want to look at this woman, and then we will come back and look at Jesus. Here’s the first point. Remember, only two points. Here’s the first, number one:

Jesus Honors Genuine Faith

Let’s go back to the text and look at verse 25. We find out something about this faith. Here is the first sub-point:

Faith has a Foundation

You need to have something to believe in. What is it that causes faith? Where does it come from? What is it placed in? We find in verse 25 that the woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, had heard of Jesus. She knew something about this person. Mark chapter three tells us that in Tyre and Sidon, people were hearing about Jesus. They were talking about His power. There has to be some sort of foundation for faith, and for her, it was hearing. It was somebody talking about Jesus. Now, we don’t know what all she knew about Jesus. We are on this side of the crucifixion and resurrection. She was on that side. We don’t know what she heard. We do know that she heard something, and what she heard prompted her to go to Jesus. I just want to stop and talk to those of you that are Christians right now. If you are already a

Christian, the more you know about Jesus, the more you will trust and believe and follow and devote yourself to Christ. You need more church, not less. You need more Bible, not less. You need more good theology, not less. Our community around us needs more people talking about Jesus so they can hear. This woman had a foundation to her faith. She had heard. Let me give you something else in verse 25. We will move quickly. Faith does not only have a foundation...

Faith is Worshipful

Do you see her there in verse 25 when she gets in front of Jesus? “*But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.*” It was expressive. The Greek word is *poskuew*, which is the word for *worship*. It means to get low before Jesus. I feel our worship experience on Sunday mornings evolving in some degree, and I hope that it will continue to evolve in a really good way. That evolution is expressive. It is you being engaged. It’s us singing songs that are glorifying to God. It’s not a performance, but it’s you and I together congregationally. I think worship should be expressive. It should be involved. It should be engaging. It should be directed. This woman’s worship is directed at Jesus. It is her getting low before Jesus. It is what John the Baptist meant when he said, “I’m I am not worthy to unlatch your sandal.” In our context, worship shows up in, primarily, two ways. Worship shows up personally and it shows up corporately. Real worship is personal. It happens when you and I spend some time with God in the mornings—or in the afternoons, or in the evening—with God’s word, and we find out more about God. It’s feeding our soul. We’re confessing our sins. We’re growing as Christians. It needs to happen personally, but God has also designed His people to be together. One of the very first signs of Christian discipline is showing up to worship with God’s people. Faith expresses itself in worship. I’m going to show you another thing about faith that we see in this woman in verse 25.

Faith is Desperate

She knew her condition. Look at her there in verse 25. She is desperate. She has fallen down at His feet. She understood her need and the only One that could meet that need. It's good for us to understand our condition. That's why we build it right into the worship service—it is the time of confession—so that we confess to the Lord our condition and our need, and how Jesus Christ meets that need. I mean, here's this woman...Every mother in this room understands this. She would do anything to save her daughter. Do you know what faith is? Faith is desperate. Faith goes to all kinds of lengths. What else about faith? Let me say something about faith here. Here is another point:

Faith is Empathetic

Faith is empathetic. I have to give credit to Andy Davis in Durham for this. Faith is loving someone so much that you take that on. Here's what I mean. We see the picture of the woman praying to Jesus. She's asking Jesus on behalf of her little girl. If you go over to Matthew chapter 15, where this story is told, Matthew tells it from the Jewish background. He calls her a Pagan. But what he says about her is that here's this woman, and the woman says to Jesus, "Have mercy on me." She's asking for her little girl, but she's asking Jesus to have mercy on her and not the little girl. She has so personalized her little girl's pain that it has become her own. There are some of you in here who have prayed so hard for somebody, you love them so much that their pain has become yours. It is what faith does. Faith pleads with God to the degree that you are taking something on personally. In Matthew, you have the phrase, "Have mercy." Maybe she's asking for forgiveness. Maybe there's repentance involved. *Mercy*, what a great word. *Mercy* is that you don't get what you deserve. Isn't that what Christianity is, *mercy*? We don't get what we deserve, which is hell and punishment. We get heaven and grace through Christ. Let me give you another picture about faith. Faith is focused in verse 26.

Faith is Focused

There's a lot working against this person. Let me just read it, and I'll point out some things working against her. Verse 26 says the woman was a Gentile. She

was a Syrophoenician by birth. She begged Jesus to cast the demons out of her daughter. She has a lot working against her, and the first thing working against her is that she was a woman in that culture. You've read the stories of Jesus talking to the woman at the well. The disciples were surprised not only that He was talking to a woman, but that she was a Gentile woman. She's a woman. She is Greek-speaking. She is a Pagan. She is a Gentile. She is from Tyre, the ancient enemy of the Jews. And what's remarkable is that Mark has lifted her up. She does not let cultural issues keep her from getting to Christ. This woman crosses all the barriers that have been put before her to be close to Christ. She does not offer up excuses. So what faith does is remain focused. You jump over things. There is something else you'll notice in verse 26:

Faith is Passionate

It's passionate; she's begging. You might even put *persistent* there. The text says she's begging Jesus. That's the verb that means over and over and over again. *Please, please, please*. It is to pray without ceasing. To pray without ceasing honors God and grows you closer to Him. Why does God sometimes delay in answering? Because He keeps us praying. There's another point about faith.

Faith is Humble

Here we get to the crux. I think it is the most confusing part in verses 27-28. I don't know why Jesus would talk like that. Let me read it to you: "And he said to her, 'Let the children [that is, Israel] be fed first.'" We know the Gospels, the power of God to the Jew first and then the Gentiles. We know that the Bible teaches that. But the way He said it here, "*Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.*" But she answered him, '*Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.*'" She could have been offended. Man, we live in a world where people are so easily offended. She could have said, "You're not going to talk to me like that." That was an insult. She could have turned around and stomped off. But she, instead, placed herself under the unconditional Lordship

of Christ. She didn't even blink. Her pride is gone. She has one thing she wants and she says, "Yes, Lord." What a confession. She was unoffended by the hard things of Christ. She was unoffended by the Word of God. Folks, this is where we are as believers in this world. We have hard things in the Bible to hold on to, and we live as unoffended by them. Faith is humble. Faith says, "I don't deserve anything. I come under the unconditional Lordship of Jesus."

Faith is Reverent

So, in verse 28, she says, *"Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."* And they do it simultaneously. There is enough on the table of the Lord. There's enough bounty there that the children start to eat, and there's enough for even the dogs to eat. "Yes, Lord." This is the only time in the Gospel of Mark that he is recognizing the position of Jesus. Part of our call is to recognize that we must have the attitude of this woman. We have this attitude of worship and prayer in our behavior—this understanding of reverence. Faith is reverent.

Faith is Rewarded

In verses 29-30, this is when it happens. Verse 28 tells us that the woman gives this really great response; it's a very witty response. Verse 29 says, "And he said to her, *"For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."* And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone." Her faith in Jesus is rewarded. What you have here is a tangible, visible, tellable way for us to see the gospel. What the gospel-tellers have is faith in God, but not just a faith in God. We have a faith in God's love. We have a faith in God's provision for us in Jesus. The gospel tells us that God loved us to the degree He gives us Jesus, who lives and dies in our place. God raised Him from the dead, and the gospel says that if you'll believe that, there's a reward. See this text. When I look at this woman, it reminds me that Jesus honors genuine faith. That's one thing. We've looked at this woman and, now, just for a few moments, I want to look at Jesus. What does this tell us about Jesus? So let's go to the second point, number two:

Jesus is Honored by Genuine Faith

I want you to see three little points as we go through it. In verse 24, you'll notice here in this passage that...

His Humanity is on Display

Verse 24 tells us before He goes—this is the last segment of his earthly life, as He will be going to the cross after this chapter. Verse 24 says He's looking for some rest and retreat. Jesus wants to be alone before He goes to the cross. That's what verse 24 tells us: *“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.”* Some of you say, “Yeah, that sounds like every day when I go home.” You want to be away from people like Jesus did. Why is this important? Why is this here? This is here to remind us of the humanity of Jesus; that He was not just away from humanity, He is a human. This tells us that you will not face a sin or temptation that He didn't face. Jesus is faced with all of the temptations we are faced with, and yet He never fell. That's why we don't rely on our righteousness. We're trying to be perfect but no, we put our faith in the righteousness of Jesus who lived for us. We call it the active obedience of Jesus. We don't just believe in Jesus dying in our place, we believe in Jesus living in our place. There is something else on display from Jesus. I want you to see His compassion.

His Compassion is on Display

Here He is, wanting to be away. He is trying to have just a quiet couple of days, and this desperate Pagan woman—this nameless, desperate, unknown, non-Jewish woman—comes, and He grants her her wish. This is His compassion on display. Do you wonder what Jesus Christ thinks of His church planted here at Hickory Grove? There are hundreds of people that are moving into the area, and apartments are going up in the reach of three or four or five miles from this place where I'm standing. He views them with compassion, and that's how we should view the people coming into our region. We should

work to reach them. Why do we do that? It's the mission that we're doing in October. That's not for show, that's for reaching people. We go back to verse 24 and see the compassion of Jesus on display.

I think the most remarkable thing—and I'll close with this one—I think the most remarkable thing is...

His Omnipotence is on Display

Come back and see the miracle in verses 27-29. Let me show it to you: *“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.’ But she answered him, ‘Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.’ And he said to her, ‘For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.’ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.”* When did that happen? He's in the midst of a conversation with this woman. He didn't cast it out. He didn't say anything. He didn't go there and put His hands on the little girl. While He's talking to this woman, sometime in this conversation, He just thought it. He just thinks it, and it's done. Be careful how you talk about the Lord Jesus. Jesus doesn't try to get you to do something, Jesus just does it. There's no trying. You and I are so much weaker than demons; demons are so much more powerful than us. But Jesus, He just has the thought in the midst of a conversation, and it's over. This passage is here to see this woman's faith, emulate her faith, and see the power of Jesus.

Your faith in Jesus is never wasted. Jesus honors genuine faith. Jesus is honored by genuine faith.

(Pastor prays)