



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Living Hope."
(Easter, 2026)
"The Hope of a Mom." Text(s): *Mark 7.24-37*.

□ Day #1—Monday, May 11th. Read: Mark 7.24. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

Yesterday on Mother's Day, we looked at one of the moms in the Bible. An unnamed woman who sought healing for her demon-possessed daughter. Of course, the focus of this story is not the mom but Jesus. At the same time, we can see in this mother an attitude of faith and confidence in Jesus that we can follow. This week, we will study the encounter with this mom and the miracle of her daughter's healing, as well as the following miracle of Jesus' healing a deaf man. Both of these healings reveal to us a Jesus who is Lord over *all things*—so that we can hold on and stand strong in our *living hope* in Jesus our Lord!

This is the first of three events Mark recorded from Jesus' third journey beyond the borders of Galilee (for the three journeys see *Mark 4.35; 5.20; 6.32-52; 7.24-8.10*). On this journey, Jesus actually went out of Palestine, apparently for the only time. These events in Gentile territory are an appropriate sequel to Jesus' teaching, given in *Mark 7.1-23* and a preview of the outreach of the Gospel into the Gentile world (See also *Mark 13.10; 14.9*).

In verse 24, Jesus leaves (likely Capernaum) and went to the vicinity of Tyre, a Mediterranean seaport city in Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) about 40 miles northwest of Capernaum. Because of excellent, early Greek manuscript support, the words "and Sidon" (usually in the ESV margin) should be included. Jesus went there not to minister publicly to the people but to secure privacy and rest, as well as to teach His disciples. This is the reason that Jesus did not want the crowds to know where He was. However, as often happened, Jesus could not hide His presence since news of His healing power was becoming well known (*Mark 3.8*). Mark records three miracles that Jesus performed as He ministered to the Gentiles in the region of Tyre and Sidon. Ultimately allowing the crowds to come to Him, Jesus was "practicing" what He "preached:" there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, for all are sinners and need a Savior.

The purpose of Jesus' withdrawal to Tyre was to secure the rest which had been interrupted both in the wilderness (Ch. 6:30–34) and in the district of Gennesaret (Ch. 6:53–56). The house provided a place of retreat for Jesus with his disciples. Mark's reference to the house serves two purposes. It indicates to men engaged in missionary activity the necessity for rest (cf. Ch. 6:31). At the same time, persons who come seeking Jesus in a house are presented sympathetically in the Gospel as having full confidence in the Lord (Ch. 2:1–5; 3:20; 7:24–30).¹

Consider/Reflect: Sometimes, we feel guilty for resting or taking a day off. However, as we see in this text, even Jesus needed rest! Rest is God's gift to us, as well as one way we exercise proper stewardship of our body and mind. This is one reason why God gave us *Sabbath*. How are you doing with *Sabbath rest* in your life?

□ Day #2—Tuesday, May 12th. Read: Mark 7.25-26. —Examine: The Text and its Message.

Mark notes that this unnamed mother comes to Jesus *immediately* (immediately is a favorite word used by Mark. It is the Greek word, "*euthys*." See *Mark 1.10*). The woman fell at Jesus' feet, an expression of deep respect as well as personal grief over her daughter's condition (See also *Mark 9.17-18, 20-22, 26*). The woman "begged" Jesus to cast out the spirit. Commenting on the word, "begged," K. Wuest notes that, "The verb is in the imperfect tense, progressive in action. The woman kept right on

¹ W.L. Lane. *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1974).

asking our Lord. The verb is *erōtaō* (ἑρωτάω), which is used of a request, not a mere question.”² In other words, this woman (mom) was *demanding* something be done for her daughter. She was not going to give up!

Mark stressed the woman’s non-Jewish identity: she was a Syrophoenician, part of the province of Syria. Matthew called her a “Canaanite woman” (*Matthew 15.22*). Notice that there was much against her as she came to Jesus. Certainly, her nationality was against her; she was clearly non-Jewish. Second, she was a woman in a deeply patriarchal society. Third, Satan was against her, for one of his demons had taken control of her daughter’s life. Fourth, the disciples were against her (*Matthew 15.23*). Finally, and for a moment, it looked as though even Jesus was against her! It was not an easy situation, and yet she triumphed because of her great faith. This is one key element of this story: the woman’s persistence and confidence in Jesus.

[The woman’s demand]...“To cast out the demon” (τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκβάλλῃ) shows that the woman had heard not only of Jesus’ presence in the area but also that he had the power to exorcise demons. This implied that Jesus’ fame had clearly spread to the populace of Tyre (cf. 3:8). By seeking him out and asking for his help, she entrusted herself to him and acknowledged without question his power to accomplish the task.³

Consider/Reflect: If, like the woman, Jesus’ “delays” are not always “denials,” what does this mean for the “delays” in your life?

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, May 13th. Read: Mark 7.27. –Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus’ reply seems so unlike Jesus, so stern, even rude. Again, as we discussed on Sunday, Jesus is a master teacher. He had just told His disciples that it is not what is on the *outside* that defiles a person, but what is on the *inside!*—*the heart!* Now, with a living example in front of them, will just one of the disciples stick up for this woman, or challenge Jesus on what He had said earlier?

Additionally, scholars have noted that Jesus’ response was appropriate to His purpose for being there. While using figurative language, Jesus was telling the woman that His first priority in His ministry was to instruct His disciples. Some commentators believe that Jesus was probably quoting a popular proverb, and was therefore not being as harsh as it sounds. While Jesus was on earth, His mission was in the first place to Israel (*Matthew 15.24*). After the cross, the time of the Gentiles would come, in the universal mission so central to Mark and the Apostle Paul’s writings. Yet, in another example of Jesus’ mercy and this woman’s “great faith,” her persistence and confidence in Jesus led Her to approach Jesus with her great need no matter what would be said to her! She accepted good-humoredly that she had no right at this stage to claim God’s grace but simply threw herself on Jesus’ mercy, turning Jesus’ parable back in His direction. Besides testing the disciples, was Jesus also testing this woman, to see if her faith was great enough? I believe so. Such faith was and is rewarded!

One of the questions in this text is Jesus’ use of the word, “dogs.” Was Jesus calling this woman a dog? No. Let us recall the context: Jesus is trying to teach His disciples about who is in and who is out in the Kingdom of God. Using figurative (and vivid) language, J.A. Brooks notes that

Jews often used the word “dogs” to refer to Gentiles...The obvious meaning is that Jews took precedence over Gentiles during the ministry of Jesus. Even Paul later adhered to a similar principle (Rom 1:16). The harshness is softened somewhat by the use of the diminutive form that could be translated “puppies” and could refer to house pets rather than the scavengers of the streets. The phrase probably is best understood as an “acted parable.” Yet, the seeming harshness could have served to test the woman’s faith. Incidentally, on this occasion Jesus may have spoken in Greek rather than Aramaic. There is every reason to believe that he knew some Greek.⁴

Consider/Reflect: “The woman seizes upon her characterization as a family pet and expresses her willingness to assume even a most modest place within the household...This outsider’s great faith contrasts sharply with that of the Pharisees and even the disciples, who fail to understand much of what Jesus is teaching. Such unswerving faith results in the daughter’s full recovery.”⁵

2 K.S. Wuest. *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997).

3 R.A. Guelich. *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989).

4 J.A. Brooks. *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991).

5 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

□ **Day #4--Thursday, May 14th. Read: Mark 7.28-30.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The woman accepted Jesus' statement with the words, "Yes, Lord" ("Lord, in Greek, could also be translated "Sir," a title of respect). She realized He had the right to refuse her request. However, feeling no insult in the imagery Jesus used, the woman *playfully* pressed Jesus a little further, essentially saying, "Even the little dogs eat the little crumbs." Her point was that even the little dogs get a little food, even as the children receive the main meal. Again, I think her interaction with Jesus (and Jesus' actions as well) are playful. In fact, she becomes a living parable for the disciples (the children) about the universal nature of His messianic work.

It is significant that the two times in the Gospel record, when Jesus commended "great faith," He was responding to the faith of Gentiles and not Jews: this Syrophenician woman and the Roman centurion (*See Matthew 8.5-13*). It is also worth understanding that in both situations, Jesus healed *at a distance*, possibly suggesting the spiritual distance between Jews and Gentiles at that time (*See Ephesians 2.11-22*). Finally, the people of Tyre and Sidon were not known for their faith (*Matthew 11.21-22*), yet this woman dared to believe that Jesus could deliver her daughter!

Because of the woman's reply, and her persistence, which demonstrated her humility and faith, Jesus told her to go home and assured her that the demon had left her daughter. The words "has left" (perfect tense in the Greek,) indicates the cure was already complete. When the woman returned home, she in fact found that her child was resting peacefully and the demon had left her. This is the only miracle recorded in Mark that Jesus performed at a distance without giving any vocal command. Importantly, the woman had no assurance that her daughter was healed; she literally stepped forward in faith and obeyed Jesus even before she had any "proof" of healing. Great faith is faith that *takes God at His Word and will not let go, holding on to Jesus, our living hope!* Great faith can lay hold of even the slightest encouragement and turn it into a fulfilled promise. "Lord, increase our faith."

- How do you think Jesus increases your faith?

Consider/Reflect: "In the regions of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus reveals that He has come to save the Gentiles along with the Jews. Unfortunately, the all-encompassing nature of His Gospel is viewed today as a threat by many Christian communities; outreach to other cultures might be ignored. But Jesus calls us to repent of such notions, and He reaches out to all people. No one lies beyond the scope of His love and grace. [Pray]: Lord, help us to share the Gospel with all people, especially those who are different from us, that all may be edified in the faith. Amen."⁶

□ **Day #5— Friday, May 15th. Read: Mark 7.31-34.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Starting in verse 31, Jesus leaves the region of Tyre going into the region of Decapolis ("ten cities"); this was also Gentile territory. However, before Jesus left the region, the people were glorifying the God of Israel (*See also Matthew 15.30-31*). Now, a man is brought to Jesus who was handicapped by both deafness and a speech impediment—and, Jesus heals him! This miracle is recorded only by Mark and would be especially appreciated by his Roman readers, since the "ten cities" region was considered as a "Rome away from Rome."

This passage also concludes a Marcan "narrative cycle" (*Mark 6.32-7.37*), noting the public *confession* about the character and power of Jesus (*Mark 7.37*). For example, this event prefigured the opening of the disciples' "ears" (*See Mark 8.18, 27-30*). In a second narrative cycle beginning in *Mark 8.1*, at the end, we are told of the disciples' *confession* of who Jesus truly is: The Messiah and the Son of the living God (*Mark 8.27-30*)!

In our text, some people *begged* (again, just like the mom earlier) Jesus to place His hand on a man who was deaf and could hardly talk (Greek: "*mogilalon*," "speaking with difficulty"). This rare Greek word occurs only here and in the Septuagint (The Greek translation of the Old Testament of *Isaiah 35.6*, a passage promising the coming of God's rule on earth). In healing this man, Jesus used sign language and symbolic acts (which Mark did not explain) that uniquely suited the man's needs and caused him to exercise his faith. Jesus took the man away privately for the purpose of communicating with this man one-to-one. By touching the man's ears and tongue, spitting on the ground and looking up to heaven, Jesus conveyed what He was going to do. Possibly, by taking the man away from the crowd, Jesus was insuring that the healing would be private and the man would not become a public attraction. Since the man was deaf, he could not hear Jesus' words, but he could feel Jesus' fingers in his ear and the touch on his tongue; this would encourage the man's faith. Jesus' "deep sigh" may have reflected Jesus' compassion for the man, as well as Jesus' strong emotion as He battled the satanic powers that enslaved this suffering man and

others. This sigh was also a prayer to the Father on behalf of the deaf and mute man. Jesus then gave the Aramaic command “*Ephphatha!*” meaning “Be opened!” (Literally, “be completely opened”). The same word is used in connection with prayer in *Romans 8.23*, and the noun in *Romans 8.26*. This word could easily be lip-read by a deaf person. Immediately (Mark’s favorite word again, “*euthys,*”) at Jesus’ command, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he could speak clearly. Defective speech usually results from defective hearing—both physically and spiritually! As one commentator has described this event, while the man did not hear Jesus speak, the creation heard the command of the Creator and this man was healed!

Consider/Reflect: [In His discussion with the Pharisees in Mark 7] “Jesus points out the hypocrisy of their external approach to religion, when the real issue is the state of one’s heart (vv. 14–23). Traveling beyond Jewish territory, Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile woman who appeals to Him. The juxtaposition of incidents underlines the hardness of the leaders of God’s people. The men who lead Israel are blind, but even a pagan woman realizes who Jesus is (vv. 24–30). Finally, Jesus heals a deaf and dumb man in the same area. The Pharisees choose not to hear or acknowledge Jesus, but Christ will open the ears of Gentiles, and they will glorify God (vv. 31–37).”⁷

□ **Day #6-Saturday, May 16th. Read: Mark 7.35-37.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

In spite of our Lord’s strict command for the people to keep quiet about the miracles, they told the news everywhere (*See Mark 1.34, 44; 3.12; 5.43*); and this resulted in a large crowd gathering and bringing people who were sick in body and soul. If we recall the beginning of this passage, Jesus was trying to enjoy some rest. Yet, He took time to heal all those who came to Him. What was the result? These Gentiles “glorified the God of Israel” (*See also Matthew 15.31*).

It is interesting that the more Jesus commanded, (literally in the Greek, “kept commanding”) the people to be silent, the more they kept talking about Jesus and what He could do! Likely, one reason Jesus did not want the people to discuss what He had done, was because He wanted to minister in the Decapolis region without being regarded as a popular “miracle-worker.” Jesus’ miracles left the people “overwhelmed with amazement” (Greek: “*exeplessonto;*” “struck out, overwhelmed”; *Mark 1.22; 6.2; 10:26; 11.18*). Again, the crowd’s climactic confession (*Mark 7.37*) is a general statement about their understanding of Jesus, based on previous reports (*Mark 3.8; 5.20*). The words “the deaf and the mute” are plural in Greek, referring to two classes of people. Mark possibly intended an allusion to *Isaiah 35.3-6* as reflected in the crowd’s confession.

Consider/Reflect: “Jesus heals another person in a Gentile region, further emphasizing His love for every race and kind of people. This serves as yet one more example of why we need to avoid the temptation to narrow the scope of the mission and to ignore opportunities to reach out to those who are different than ourselves. Jesus’ healing of this man, immediately after He restored the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, underscores that He desires to love, cleanse, and heal all people. [Pray]: Lord, You have done everything well. Help us also to see the depths of Your mercy and grace, that we understand them as gifts meant for all. Amen.”⁸

7 L.O. Richards. *The Bible Reader’s Companion* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991).
8 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.