



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

Sermon Series: "Jesus, Who?"
(Pentecost, 2026)
"Faith." Text(s): *Matthew 15.21-28.*

☐ Day #1—Monday, August 17th. Read: Matthew 15.21. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

Jesus leaves the area of Capernaum, moving to the region of Tyre (modern Lebanon) and Sidon. These cities were on the Mediterranean coast about thirty and fifty miles respectively from Galilee. Because of excellent, early Greek manuscript support, the words "and Sidon" (usually indicated in a margin note) should be included. Going into this predominantly Gentile area, would be unusual for a Jewish Rabbi. According to C.E. Arnold:

Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities in northwest Philistia/Phoenicia, an ancient region that bordered Galilee to the west along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They were known throughout the ancient world as powerful maritime commercial centers. In Israel they became proverbial for pagan peoples, often linked as the object of condemnation from Old Testament prophets for their Baal worship and arrogant pride in their power and wealth¹

Jesus ministering in this Gentile territory is an appropriate sequel to what Jesus has been teaching in *Matthew 15.1-20* about what *truly defiles* a person. As Tyre and Sidon were largely Gentile areas, Jesus' insistence that (Jewish) food laws, ritual laws, as well as any over-focus on outward purity, rather than a *true focus on the human heart*, would be a fitting context to both prove Jesus' point, as well as a preview of the mission to the Gentiles that will be ultimately fulfilled through Paul's missionary travels. (See also *Mark 13.10; 14.9*).

As we discussed these past few weeks, at this point in His mission, Jesus is at the height of His popularity. People were likely coming from miles away to see Jesus and get from Him what they were looking for. He could not conceal His presence since news of His healing power (and the feeding miracle) had preceded Him (*Matthew 14.34-36*). 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. Soon, Jesus will be confronted by a living example of what He has been teaching about and ultimately, the kind of person that He has come to bring into the Kingdom of God...A sinner (outsider) who has nowhere to go and knows that her only hope is in this man she has heard about—Jesus!

Consider/Reflect: For what would you walk "many miles away" to get from Jesus?

☐ Day #2—Tuesday, August 18th. Read: Matthew 15.22-23. —Examine: The Text and its Message.

Jesus is now confronted by one of those who were "outside" the religious circles of the disciples and the religious leaders; an unnamed woman, whose little daughter was demon-possessed. In the Gospel of Mark, Mark tells us that this woman *immediately fell* at Jesus' feet, an expression of deep respect as well as personal grief over her daughter's condition (See *Mark 9.17-18, 20-22, 26*). The Greek text reflects that she repeatedly asks Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

Matthew notes the woman's non-Jewish identity: she was a *Canaanite*. Matthew's description that she was a Canaanite, is "designed to evoke scriptural images of the original inhabitants of Palestine as objects of scorn and enemies of Israel."² Craig Blomberg adds...

¹ C.E. Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan, 2002).

² J. Nolland. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005).

Matthew uses the Old Testament place names, as he does with the word “Canaanite” in v. 22, instead of Mark’s “Syrophoenician”...in order to conjure up their evil connotations from bygone eras....“Canaanite” was the general term for the pagan inhabitants of the promised land Israel was told to conquer in Joshua’s day. On this woman’s lips, “Lord” (most recently used by the disciples during the Christophany of 14:28, 30) will again call Jesus’ divinity to Matthew’s readers’ minds. “Son of David”... is the distinctively Jewish designation for the Messiah and proves equally striking on this pagan woman’s lips. “Have mercy” echoes the cry of the blind men in 9:27 and appeals to Jesus to relieve the plight of this woman’s daughter.³

Surprisingly, Jesus does not immediately respond to this woman. Commentators believe that this was intentional on Jesus’ part, meant to test the woman’s faith and persistence, as well as the disciples’! Jesus’ silence (and we do not know if it was a few seconds or minutes) would also magnify the miracle. For the disciples, let us recall that previously, Jesus has been teaching about the primacy of the human heart; it’s not what is outside a person (food/other people) that makes them unclean and unacceptable to God. It is what is in the heart—who the person *is* and what *comes out of the heart*! Perhaps Jesus’ silence here is Jesus’ hope that one of His disciples will stand up for this woman?

Notice that there was much against this woman as she came to Jesus. Her nationality was against her; she was an ancestor from one of Israel’s greatest enemies. She was a woman in a patriarchal society. Satan was against her; for one of his demons had taken control in her daughter’s life. Moreover, the disciples were against her, as they wanted Jesus to “send her away.” Likewise, for a while, it looked as though even Jesus was against her! Clearly, this was not an easy situation for her. However, her daughter was suffering and she needed Jesus! This woman demonstrated *great faith*. This is one key element of this story: the woman’s persistence and confidence in Jesus.

Consider/Reflect: [This Canaanite woman] “...demonstrates familiarity with Jewish messianic tradition by calling Jesus “Son of David” and calling for his merciful, miraculous ministry of exorcism for her daughter. Her use of “Lord” three times in the interaction (15:22, 25, 27) is probably for her a title of great respect, but she is saying more than she realizes.”⁴

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, August 19th. Read: Matthew 15.24-25. –Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus tells the woman that His primary mission is to the people of Israel. While Jesus was on earth, His mission was in the first place to Israel. After the cross, the time of the Gentiles would come in the universal mission so central to the Apostle Paul’s mission. The woman’s faith was great and so was her persistence, for her need was great. As we will see, she accepted (likely, good-humoredly) that she had no right at this stage to claim God’s grace but simply threw herself on Jesus’ mercy, turning Jesus’ mini-parable back in His direction. Was Jesus only testing her, to see if her faith was a persistent faith? I believe so. Such faith was and is rewarded. It is a miracle of grace that Gentiles share in all the promises of God made to Israel (See *Romans 11.18*).

This woman will not let Jesus go! She now kneels (likely, she has been kneeling all along) and simply asks Jesus to “help me!” According to D.A. Carson, at this point in Jesus’ encounter with this woman, Jesus ...

...wanted his disciples and the Canaanite woman to recognize “that His activities were circumscribed not only by the inevitable limitations of His manhood, but by the specific part that He had been called to play during His brief earthly life” ...True, he was “Son of David,” as the woman said; but that did not give her the right to enjoy the benefits covenanted to the Jews. The kingdom must first be offered to them. The thought is like John 4:22: “Salvation is from the Jews.” The Samaritan woman, like this Canaanite woman, had to recognize this—even if a time was coming when true worship would transcend such categories (John 4:23–26). The woman knelt before Jesus...and cried, as only the mother of an afflicted child could, “Lord, help me!”⁵

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

3 C. Blomberg, *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

4 Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*.

5 F. E. Gaebelin, Ed. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

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

□ **Day #4--Thursday, August 20th. Read: Matthew 15.26-27. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus' *playful* reply was appropriate to His purpose for being there. It was cast in figurative language. Again, Jesus was telling the woman that His first priority in being there was to instruct His disciples—the people of Israel. Some commentators believe that Jesus was probably quoting a popular proverb, and was therefore not being as harsh as it sounds. In any case, the emphasis is on the first part of the sentence. Again, C.E. Arnold is helpful...

The “children’s bread” emphasizes the care that God promised to provide for his covenant children, Israel: “You are the children of the LORD your God.” As a metaphor, “dogs” is a humiliating label for those apart from, or enemies of, Israel’s covenant community. Some suggest that the diminutive form for dog used here (*kynarion*) conjures up an image of a little puppy dog, so that Jesus is using the term as an endearing metaphor. More likely, the diminutive form parallels “children’s bread” and suggests a dog that has been domesticated, but is nonetheless still a dog. Jesus is contrasting God’s care for those of his family with those who are not. He is not condoning the use of a derogatory title, as the response of the woman indicates.⁷

On Tuesday, it was suggested that Jesus’ initial silence, as well as His image of the children’s’ bread not being given to “little dogs,” was a test of faith for this woman *and* Jesus’ disciples. As Craig Keener writes...

Jesus is not cursing the woman, but he is putting her off (compare 8:7). It is possible that he is testing her, as teachers sometimes tested their disciples, but he is certainly reluctant to grant her request and is providing an obstacle for her faith. Perhaps he is requiring her to understand his true mission and identity, lest she treat him as one of the many wandering magicians to whom Gentiles sometimes appealed for exorcisms...The woman recognizes that Jesus is no mere magician who performs feats for fame or money. By hailing Jesus as Son of David, she has already acknowledged him as the rightful king over a nation that had conquered her ancestors...Now she refuses to dispute that Jesus’ mission is to Israel first and that her status is secondary to that of Israelites...she believes Jesus will have more than enough power left over from what Israel does not need or want.⁸

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 analogy Jesus used, the woman pressed Jesus a little further: “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.

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

□ **Day #5— Friday, August 21st. Read: Matthew 15.28.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

This woman’s persistence and understanding, demonstrated her humility and faith. When Jesus told the woman that her request was granted and that her daughter would be healed, the woman still had to trust Jesus! She had to literally “step out” in faith toward her home, as she did not know the condition of her daughter at that moment (We are told that the girl was healed *immediately*). In Mark’s account, Jesus told her to go home and assured her that her daughter was healed and the demon had left her daughter. (Again, in Mark, the words “has left” is in the perfect tense in the Greek, indicating the cure was already complete).

Jesus told her that her faith was *great*! Great faith is faith that takes God at His Word and will not let go no matter what! *Great faith* finds its object in a *great God* who has come to feed us with the bread of life—Jesus Christ!

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 Canaanite woman and the Roman centurion (*Matthew 8.5–13*). It is also worth remembering 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!

7 Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*.

8 C.S. Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1993).

Consider/Reflect: “This persistent Canaanite woman gains Jesus’ praise for believing that He will help her sick daughter. In time of need, we often either fail to pray with such determination or only ask hesitantly. Instead, we ought to “pray without ceasing” (1Th 5:17). Jesus hears all prayers offered in His name, and He will answer in His own time and way as is best for us. Therefore, we can pray with confidence. [Pray]: Lord, sometimes I have not because I ask not. Move me to pray with confidence. Amen.”⁹

□ **Day #6-Saturday, August 22nd. Read: Psalm 67.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther’s Small Catechism*.¹⁰ Read and mediate on *Psalm 67* and then...

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Consider/Reflect: “There is only one way of salvation, which Israel’s God provided in the work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, we believe in God’s salvation through Christ and proclaim it to all the world...“Thine over all shall be the praise And thanks of ev’ry nation; And all the world with joy shall raise The voice of exultation. Amen.” (*Lutheran Service Book* 823:2)¹¹

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...

Sermon Series: “Jesus, Who?”

Scripture Texts:

Isaiah 51.1-6

Romans 11.33-12.8

Matthew 16.13-20

⁹ *The Lutheran Study Bible.*

¹⁰ Martin Luther. “*Luther’s Small Catechism*.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible.*

¹¹ *The Lutheran Study Bible.*