

Waiting for the Crumbs of the Gospel



Mark 7: 24-30

Open to the gospel according to Mark. It's Memorial Day weekend, and we want to make sure that we don't just honor our veterans with a cover on the bulletin. I know Memorial Day is literally a holiday for those who have given their lives, but we are so thankful that in time of war, not all people had to make that great sacrifice. If you have served or are serving our country, would you please stand and let us say thank you. I remember being a little boy at Granny Bogard's and in the back bedroom there was a military uniform that hung in the closet. It was from one of Granny and Grandad's grandchildren who gave their life serving in a war. I can't tell you how that affected me when I would go in the closet and see that uniform and they would tell me the story again. I remember being really little attending the funeral and not really understanding, but just seeing that uniform hanging in the closet had a deep impact on me as a young boy and I grew up to be so thankful for the men and women who sacrificed the greatest thing they could sacrifice, ultimately, and that was their life. If you are a family who has had someone sacrifice their life for our country, please stand so we can say thank you.

We are going to continue through the gospel of Mark as we read this morning from Mark chapter 7. We are only reading a few verses as it's a short story because Mark is trying to get us to the cross as fast as he can, but it's a powerful story. It's literally a story that I think finishes the two stories we talked about last Sunday. Yet, it's a story that is also not just going to grab a hold of what we've been talking about, it's a story that is going to get us ready for the launching of the gospel and for us, as the church, fully understanding what God has called us to be a part of. I hope you're ready. I don't know about you, but I've just been amazed at how Mark puts these stories together to have a purpose other than just recording the narrative of Jesus' life. Remember, he's writing to a Gentile audience. Keep that in mind as you hear this story. Remember, Jesus just taught in the previous story that there are no unclean foods that can go into your body that can defile you. As we read this, keep in mind Acts chapter 10 about the story of Peter where he saw a vision. Three times, he was offered to eat of all of these different animals in a sheet, and he was hungry, but he refused them. As soon as that was over, there was a knock on the door. A group of people were coming from a Gentile man named Cornelius who God had answered his prayer and they told him there was a man in Joppa who would tell him all the things that he needed to know. And now Peter, for the first time, understands the church is going to launch out, not just in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, but they're literally going to understand that the gospel was to be taken to Gentiles as well. Keep all of that in mind because Peter is the source of Mark's gospel. With all of that in mind, you're going to go, wow when you hear this story if you haven't read it already.

Scripture

"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. But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 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."

(Prayer)

Father, thank You so much for this opportunity to gather in Your house with Your people on this Memorial Day weekend, a holiday, but yet a holiday we don't want to enjoy without stopping and remembering why it is a holiday. Father, we pray that ultimately tomorrow as we think about the six hundred and twenty five thousand plus people who gave their life in the Civil War, a horrible war, may we also remember that there's been over six hundred and fifty thousand other Americans give their life, not just on this soil, but on foreign soil, not just because of our freedom, but because of other people's freedom. Father, how amazing it is to be a country that is not just concerned about ourselves, but we're concerned about others and we want everyone to have what we have, and that's true freedom. Father, I don't know this to be true, but I hope that somewhere it is rooted in the DNA of us as American citizens to not just defend our freedom but other freedoms because of the Christian influence on this country that we know that Jesus didn't just die for Israel, but He died for the sins of the whole world. Father, You not only want Israel to know about salvation in Your Son and to be free in Him, You wanted all the nations to be free in Christ. Father, let us see that on this Memorial Day weekend, that's what this story is about. We couldn't have planned this; we couldn't have timed this to be this way, but what we see here is a true incidence in the life of Jesus that's basically recorded for the church, a Gentile church, so that they would understand the mission of the gospel. Father, we thank You, we thank You. Empower us now to preach, empower us now to listen, empower us to act, and empower us to be who You have called us to be, and that is Your church. In Your precious Son's name we pray, amen.

Almost three weeks ago, we pulled our camper to Hillman's Ferry to get a spot for this weekend. Because the camper had been set up and we paid some money for that campsite, Celisa took the grandkids this week, and she's been at the camper all week with the grandkids because Kory and Katie have been in North Carolina as Kory continues to study for his doctorate and pastoral ministry. You've got to understand, I've been over there most of the week, but I would leave about 5:00 in the morning and I wouldn't get back to the camper until about 8:30 or 9:00, so Celisa literally had the four grandkids all to herself this entire week. But when I had all day yesterday to be there all day, I heard something come out of her mouth that I have never heard come out of her mouth before, and that is it got time to eat (now you have to understand we have four grandchildren) and there was probably, conservatively, not exaggerating, twelve to fifteen kids with our kids, not counting Evie Kate. Then I heard Celisa say, "Alright guys, ya'll know it's time to eat; go to your campers." All of a sudden, Celisa shooed away all of the strays, so to speak, and it was just the Cunningham's. I had never seen her do that, but here's what I understood, and what I hope you understand. It's one thing if people show up at your house with your big deep freeze, your big cabinets, and your big refrigerator. But when you're in a little bitty camper, the refrigerator is really small, the coolers are really small, and there's not a lot of cabinet space. And evidently, Celisa and all the moms and grandmothers had gotten together and just had this rule where we're going to let all the kids run together until it's time to eat. When it's time to eat, you aren't responsible for feeding my kids and I'm not responsible for feeding your kids; let's just remind the kids for everybody to go to their campers. Alright, last night we get ready to sit down for supper and Erin Moore's little boy, Riley, just didn't go home. Now, Riley was being nice, he didn't say a word, he was doing his own thing, and all of a sudden, I look down and realize we're going to have a little bit extra. So I just said, "Riley, have you eaten yet?" "No." "Do you want to eat?" "Nah..." but he was looking at that cheeseburger I had just made. Now, Riley knew he wasn't supposed to eat with us, he was supposed to go back, but he didn't want to go back; he wanted to play. I don't know about you, but have you ever known the rules, but you really wished you didn't have to go somewhere else, but maybe you could just take part in what's happening right here, even

though you know you're really not supposed to, even though you really know it's not for you? That's kind of how Riley was. It's almost Riley was waiting to see if there was going to be any leftovers.

When we hear this story, this is a strange story. As a matter of fact, I don't know about you, but on the surface, if I were not a follower of Christ, here would be one of the stories I would use to say I am not following that guy named Christ, because there was a woman who had a daughter who was possessed by a demon, and she went to Jesus and Jesus told her that the food was for the children, not for the dogs. He basically called her a dog, wow! Who would want to follow a guy like that? If I were a critic of Christianity, this is a story I would use and my headline would read, "JESUS THINKS WOMEN ARE DOGS, especially Gentile women." Are you guys ready for a story that absolutely blows my mind, yet when you see it, not as you just read it, but if you can see it with your sanctified imagination, if you can see is where you understand what's really going on, it's an amazing story.

Let's get this picture. The Pharisees and scribes have come down from Jerusalem and they have noticed Jesus' disciples aren't washing their hands before they eat. We went through that last week about the Jews believing if you were in the market place and you came in contact with someone who was unclean, especially Gentiles because they were unclean, if they had touched whatever you had touched, if your foot had stepped on the very spot of earth they had stepped on, you were now ceremonially unclean like them, and you couldn't eat before washing. Then Jesus takes that event to ultimately teach His disciples to teach the group of people around Him that all foods are clean now. There's not any food that can go into the body that can cause you to be unclean. It's actually what's already inside you that causes you to be unclean, and it's actually what comes out of you that is revealing your heart that makes you unclean. So here's the story. If we're the early church that Mark is writing to that is a Gentile church, we suddenly know those foods that cause the children of Israel to believe they were clean and we are unclean, those foods that have been divided into clean and unclean, God is teaching them that now all foods are clean. So here's what we know; there are no unclean foods.

Now, if you're reading the gospel just as a narrative, if you're just reading as a journal, if you're just taking facts, then you understand Jesus leaves Galilee and He goes into Gentile territory. He goes into the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon, two cities that were forty miles northwest, and sixty-five miles northwest of Capernaum where Jesus has made His ministry headquarters. They are Phoenician cities. They are under the domination of Syria, yet both of these cities have their own kings, their own gods, and their own coinage. They are major cities because they're on the Mediterranean coast. As a matter of fact, the city of Tyre literally means the rock. You've seen it on pictures and maps; two huge rocks with a three thousand foot ridge that served as a barrier, a break, from the Mediterranean Sea, which allowed them to have one of the greatest harbors on the Mediterranean coast. You and I know about the Phoenicians, they were a sea faring people. They were the first people who learned to navigate by the stars. Up until the Phoenician society, when men would get into their boats and began to travel the Mediterranean Sea, they would hug the coastline because they had no idea where they were going out on that sea. All of a sudden, the Phoenicians who studied the stars began to understand there are some fixed points in the sky. The next thing you know, they began to travel across the Mediterranean Sea and it changed the known world. I think we know something about the Phoenicians, they discovered the alphabet. They passed that on to all of us as they traveled from city to city because they were a commercial people. So they developed an alphabet so they could get all the peoples they traded with in a common way so that trade would be easier for them. Jesus now leaves Israel, so to speak.

Watch this. He's just taught if you rub shoulders with a Gentile in the marketplace, it will not make what they touched unclean, and it won't make you unclean if you touch it before you eat. Now Jesus does something radical. He actually goes into Gentile territory! Whoa! The Lord is just that way. Have you ever noticed this about God? He doesn't ever let us just learn facts and truths in a sterile environment in a Sunday school class or a worship service. He actually sends us out into the lab. He actually forces us sometimes to have to face what we really have been taught is true. Now, Jesus and His disciples are on Gentile territory.

Everywhere they go, they've been where the unclean people are. Here's what's amazing, and I don't know if you know this because you're a scholar from Sunday school, but if you'll remember in Joshua, when God gave the children of Israel the Promised Land and they finally took it, when they gave the fifth allotment to Asher, which was the northern tribe, he told them their tribal boundary was as far as Sidon the great. Listen to this; they never made Sidon theirs. It was theirs, but they never took it. It is still in Gentile hands. I hope you're getting what I'm saying. What Israel never did with military might, Jesus did with Himself. Wow! Yet when He gets here, He does kind of what is the motif of Mark's gospel, He goes into a house, and He wants to be by Himself. He wants to be alone. He wants privacy. He doesn't want anyone to know He's there, so it's almost like He's getting away, and yet Mark says, "But yet He could not be hidden."

If you think about this for just a moment, when John writes his gospels after Matthew, Mark, and Luke have been written, the synoptic gospels, (they're called the synoptic gospels because Mark wrote his gospel first, Matthew and Luke both used Mark's gospel and expanded in most places to their different audiences) but when John writes his gospel, he's an old man and he doesn't follow Mark's outline at all. He writes a unique gospel and he presents seven "I am" sayings of Jesus. Sayings like, "I am the light of the world," "I am the bread that came down from Heaven," "I am the door," "I am the good shepherd," "I am the way, the truth, and the life," "I am the resurrection," "I am the vine." When He put, I am, in front of all of those adjectives, what He is saying is I am God, I am light, I am bread, I am the way, I am the door, I'm the good shepherd, I'm the resurrection, and I am the vine. Now, here He is, Mark says, in a house not wanting anyone to know He's there, but we know you can't hide the light of the world. When God sent the bread of Heaven, guess what. Have any of you ever walked in the house and smelled the bread? The bread of the world is in the world, and no matter what house He went into, you can't hide Him. You can't hide the door, the good shepherd, the way, the resurrection, the vine, amen!

Jesus can't be hidden. But where is He? He's in Gentile territory. This is being written to a Gentile church. I hope you see what this is meaning. Let me stop right here and say this. The gospel was never meant to be just for

Israel. The gospel was meant to be for all the nations of the world. So Jesus is in a house, He doesn't want anyone to know He's there, and a woman who's a Gentile, a Syrophenician, by birth, Matthew says a Canaanite. Do you remember the Canaanites? What were they supposed to do? Israel was supposed to wipe them out, men, women, children, and not leave a trace. But they never did what God told them to do and now here is a lady who's DNA, Ancestry.com traces back to Canaan. Guess what. Matthew is going to tell us that Jesus recognizes she has a great faith. But before He recognized she had a great faith, she recognized she had a great need. Guess what her need was. She had a daughter who was possessed by demons, and these demons had so maimed her body that she was now lying at home in a bed and couldn't even move, couldn't get up. The demons had literally wrecked the physicalness of her body. She knows Jesus is in this house on Gentile soil, and somehow, she gets in the house. She falls down at the feet of Jesus and begs Him to help her daughter. Mark is trying to get us to the cross, so his stories are short, succinct, to the point. When Matthew wrote about this, seeing Mark's original outline, and as the Holy Spirit brought back this memory to him, Matthew adds a little more detail. Matthew said that she began to beg Jesus to help. As she was begging Jesus to help, Matthew says Jesus didn't answer her. That makes it worse. As a matter of fact, Jesus turned to His disciples and said I've only come to help the lost house of Israel. Whoa! Did you hear that? Jesus has a woman who has a daughter who has a demon who has a need, and He tells His disciples she is not My business. It's almost like He's been in Israel and as He has this confrontation with the Pharisees and the scribes, He is so frustrated, so exhausted, so zonked that He has to get out of the nation for a little while, so He goes into Gentile territory, which is not His ministry, which is not His territory, to rest and a woman shows up, and she's got a need. Matthew says Jesus told them I just came to save the house of Israel. They said then let's send her away, and she kept begging, Matthew says. Mark says she kept begging too, but we don't see it in the tense the way it's translated into English. All of a sudden, as she keeps begging, Jesus breaks the silence. He just turns to her and says honey; you don't give the bread that was designed for the children to the dogs. Can I just be honest with you? If you come to church and somebody called you a dog, how long are you going to hang around? How many of you are

going to be out of here? You aren't just going to be out of here, you're going to be offended. You are probably going to talk about Hardin Baptist Church. They called me a dog! You're probably going to feel like you're not welcome. I've got to be honest with you; Jesus really said this. He's in a house. He's probably sitting at a table. There's probably bread on the table, and here's a woman who's hungry. She's hungry because she has a need; she's hungry for help. She wants Jesus to do what He's been doing down in Israel, and that is to heal her daughter like He's healed people in Israel, and now He turns to her and says you don't give the bread for the children to the dogs.

You've got to keep in mind, here's the motif, here's why Mark tells us He's in a house, here is why Mark tells us He wanted to be private, here's why Mark tells us He couldn't be hidden. Many, many times Jesus would teach in parables and we're told that when a parable given, it's been given to some to know the meaning of parables but to others it's been held for them to know. That would so scare the disciples every time Jesus taught in a parable. If you remember, Matthew chapter 7, He taught in a parable about the unclean, and when He went into the house, the disciples came in the house too and asked Him to explain the parable. He says did you not get it? Do you not understand? So Jesus speaks in another parable. Everybody in this parable should know who the children are. Who are the children? The children are the nation of Israel. They are God's chosen people, so Jesus has come to feed His people. Now, about this lady who has this daughter who has a demon; you have to understand in the Gentile world if you were a woman and you were shameless and audacious, if you were one of those spirited women who weren't real submission and you kind of had a little gumption, guess what you were called by Gentile people. You were called a dog. Yeah. If you were a Jew, you thank God every morning that you are not a Gentile. Do you know how you looked upon the Gentiles? You looked upon the Gentiles as dogs. So Jesus is picking on something that was common in their day.

It's kind of like this. Everybody understands this statement: he's from the other side of the tracks. Are any of you humble enough to admit you're from the other side of the tracks, not the right side, but the wrong side? Do you know what it's like to live with that stigma your whole life? Do you

have any idea what it means to live in a county where the moment you tell your address, everybody goes, "oh man he's from..." some people don't understand what it means to be from Hardin or Dexter if you're not from this area. If you are from this area, you understand. Isn't it just like God to do what He did in Hardin to build a church? That's what's going on here. Some of you never dreamed you would drive to Hardin to go to church. People are trying to get out of Hardin! Yet, we can't. That's what's going on here. There's a culture behind this, and here's what Jesus says. The bread is for the children; you don't give it to the dogs. But watch this; there was a Greek word that the Jews and Gentiles used for dogs that talked about the mongrels, the strays, the street dogs, so to speak. Then they had another word, and Jesus used this other word here. He didn't use the ordinary word for dogs, so here is what you have to see. He's getting ready to flip something that they were used to saying, except when He flipped it, He didn't use the word they used He used the word puppy. He said you don't give the children's bread to the little puppies, to the pet dogs, so to speak, the ones who were in the house. Have you ever been called an old rascal? Sure you have! I can call you an old rascal, and with a certain look on my face, you know what I just said to you was negative. I can also call you an old rascal with a little grin on my face and you understand I'm using that as a term of affection. So I think if we could see Jesus' face, I think this is why the lady didn't run out of the house with tears flowing down her face saying God doesn't care about me and Jesus doesn't love me. When He picked up on this common expression and said you don't give the children's bread to the little puppies, the little household pets, she picked up on this. Now watch this. Previously in Israel when Jesus went in the house, His own disciples didn't get it, now He's speaking in a parable and this lady gets it. Do you know why she gets it? It's been given to her to get it. So when Jesus says what He says, quick as she could, she said you are right, Lord, you don't give the children's bread to the pets, but the pets do get to sit under the table and eat the crumbs that fall from the table. Yeah!

Many of us have pets at home and those pets are allowed to come into the house from time to time. I don't know about your pet, but our pet is told to stay away from the table. But I've noticed when we eat, Ray-Ray, if she's

in the house, she will come and get under the table. She knows not to get that nose up there at our plates, so she gets under the table. She never gets under my place or Celisa's place because when we eat, as an adult, our food stays on the plate. Do you know where she goes every time? She goes to the youngest member of the family because Ray-Ray knows that when Evie Kate eats, there will be more on the floor than her belly. Ray-Ray loves the crumbs that fall from the table at Memish and Papaw's house. As a matter of fact, I don't know if you've ever don't this or not, but sometimes if someone has a family pet around the dinner table and you don't like a certain food you were told to eat, you just act like you eat it and you hold it under the table. Come on let's confess here! You fed it to the dog and the dog was happy with what you didn't want! The dog was happy with the crumbs that fell from the table.

According to those people who study the ancient times of ancient people, at this time, Hebrew people didn't eat with knives, forks, and napkins. They ate with their hands, like some of us still do. Do you know what you did when you needed to wipe your mouth or hand? You reached for a piece of bread to wipe your mouth or hand, and then you tossed the bread. Do you know who ate the bread that was tossed? The family pet. This lady recognized her need, but she recognized her place. She recognized she was a Gentile woman who couldn't sit at the table, but she knew she was in the house. She recognized she was in the status of a pet, and even the pets got the crumbs. Listen to me. This lady didn't just have faith in the bread from Heaven; she had enough faith that if she could just get a crumb from Jesus, that crumb would hear her daughter. Wow! Wow! That's why Matthew says Jesus looked at her and said, "Great is your faith. As you desire it, so you have." Immediately, Jesus said her daughter had been healed.

Here was a lady who was a Gentile, and she was waiting for the crumbs of the gospel. Here is what Jesus is teaching this Gentile church. Don't read about the life of Jesus and understand that He didn't care about Gentiles. He came because He cared about Gentiles, but He came to save Israel. In saving Israel and starting a church that had a Jewish foundation, it would be Israel who would take the gospel to the Gentile nations. Does that make sense? So the gospel of Jesus is about Jesus feeding Israel, the children of

God, but there would be enough crumbs left for a whole world out there waiting for the crumbs. There was enough in the crumbs to save the Gentile world.

Can I just say this? I get ready to sit down and eat last night, and I just want to be honest with you; I couldn't eat my cheeseburger with little Riley because little Riley didn't want to go home. There was nothing wrong with little Riley's home, but he wanted to be with Crider, Finn, and G. He wasn't going to ask for it, but I couldn't eat. Can ask you this question? How rude of us as a church is it to do what we do and just feast and feast and feast and never realize and look around and see the people who are waiting for just a crumb, and we never offer somebody the gospel? He didn't come just to die for you; He came to die for all. But some of us get fed first so that the gospel so transforms our lives that others get fed from the crumbs. Wow! Most of us who has been a Christian for very long can't understand why Israel didn't do what God called them to do. Have you had that thought? Then why aren't we doing what we're supposed to do? You say they aren't asking. I know they aren't asking, but Riley would never have asked to eat with us last night, never, and when he was asked, he declined. When he was asked again, he declined. Finally, when he really knew it was ok and Bro Ricky and Memish wanted him to eat, he got a cheeseburger too. It's on our shoulders to see that the world knows the gospel is not just for us who are already in the church. The gospel is for those who are not in the church yet, and that's not on missionaries, that's not on pastors; that's on us. Who sees your table? Would you make sure they know it's for them too?