

Teaching Notes/Life Group Study Questions

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Uniquely Jesus

November 27, 2016

Mark 7:24-37

Coffee Question

Read verses 24-30.

Is there anything in this story that troubles you?

Is there anything Jesus did that doesn't seem "like" him?

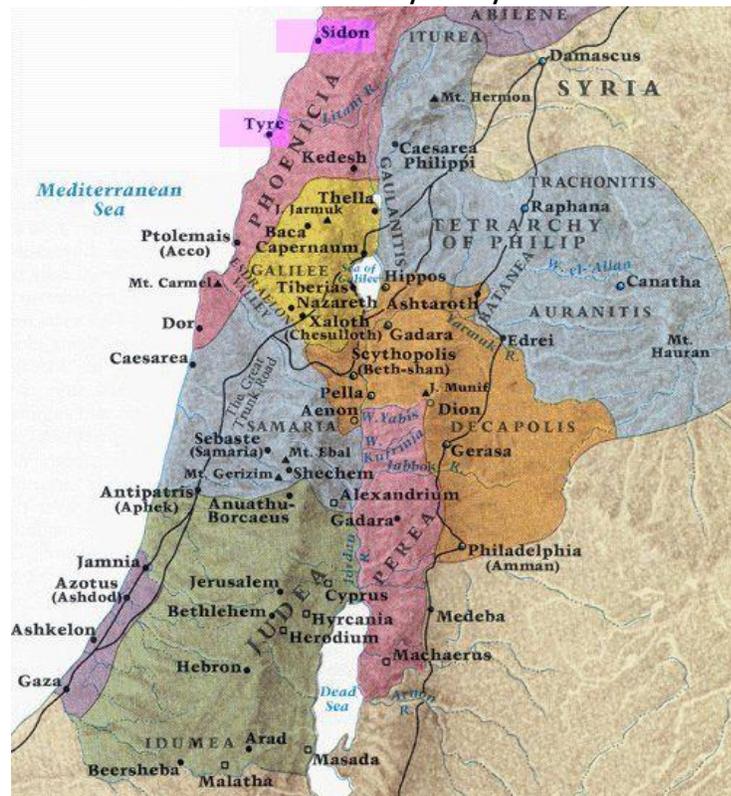
Feedback:

In addition to presenting who Jesus is, by what he said and did, we've observed in Mark's gospel that he frequently writes about faith - describing what it is, by telling us the stories of people who put their trust in Jesus.

We are going to unpack one of two stories that's told in Mark 7:24-37, and then in your Life Groups this week, you can dig into the other.

In both stories, we'll meet individuals who were in great need; and whose lives were radically changed when they put their faith in Jesus.

v.24a - where is the vicinity of Tyre?



Tyre was in the province of Phoenicia; approximately 60 km. from Capernaum. Jesus took his disciples there for a break. Earlier they had tried to get away by themselves, only to be followed by a great crowd of 20,000+ people.

v.24b - even though Jesus and the disciples tried to keep a low profile, word got out that he was there. We are not told if other people came.

Mark only tells us of this one Gentile woman who sought Jesus out.

Mark included her story for a number of reasons.

- 1. Mark wanted to contrast her coming to Jesus with how the Pharisees from Jerusalem had come.**
- 2. Mark wanted Jesus' followers to learn from Jesus how important compassion is when dealing with needy people.**
- 3. Mark wanted his readers to better grasp God's great story of salvation.**
- 4. In the telling of her story Mark provided yet another illustration of faith in action.**

In the first half of chapter 7, the Pharisees who had come down from Jerusalem, came to investigate Jesus, hoping to find something they could accuse him of, in order to bring him to trial.

Glenn Miller says: *"The [Jewish religious leaders] who were supposed to be in relationship with God, took offense with Jesus; they challenged his authority; and gave every indication that they did not understand the Scriptures they so zealously claimed to defend."* <http://christianthinktank.com/qcrude.html>

What happened between the Pharisees and Jesus tragically illustrated what John 1:11 speaks of: *"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."*

However, this Gentile woman who came to Jesus... she came so differently. When compared to the Pharisees, she knew so little about Israel's God. She came to Jesus, not hoping to find fault with him, but to plead that he would help her daughter. Mark contrasts her faith in Jesus with the determined unbelief of the Pharisees. <http://christianthinktank.com/qcrude.html>

This contrast gives us much to think upon.

The woman knew very little about the Scriptures, yet she was convinced Jesus was **an extraordinary person** - she called him, the Son of David – Matthew 15:22. She also believed that Jesus possessed **remarkable ability**.

The Pharisees who knew so much, only saw Jesus as a troublemaker; a fraud; a deceiver. There was nothing they wanted from Jesus except for him to go away. How could the Pharisees who knew the OT Scriptures so well be so blind to who Jesus is? And how could a Gentile woman who knew so little about God have such great faith in Jesus?

This causes us to ask what role 'understanding' plays in faith?

How much does someone need to know in order to trust Jesus?

The culture in which we live struggles to understand people who have faith in God. This is not unusual.

When a culture is disconnected from God, like ours is, people who profess to know God and who trust him with their lives, are viewed as oddities.

We who follow Jesus can even start to think we're weirdoes.

But when you look at it from God's perspective...

when you realize he created everything, including us...

and that human beings were made to live in relationship with him, centering their lives in him; drawing life from him...

then placing one's faith in God is not abnormal,

but simply how life is lived to the full.

What is abnormal, is to live life with no reference to God at all.

In this light, it was the Pharisees who were the exception, not the woman.

Let's press on into the story. v.25-26.

With demon possession, an evil spirit takes control of, in order to act through a person, using their body and voice, to do and to say things.

Remember the man called Legion in chapter 5?

Impure spirits can enter and possess a person when invited.

Additionally, sometimes, in cases of severe trauma, being the cruel creatures they are, they attempt to use a crisis to take hold of a person.

Something had happened to that little girl. But we are not told what.

What we do know is that it was so bad that her mother was beyond desperate.

The tense of the verb 'begged' tells us the woman repeated her request, over and over.

Tim Keller says, *"There are cowards, there are regular people, there are heroes, and then there are parents. Parents are not really on the spectrum from cowardice to courage, because if your child is in jeopardy, you simply do what it takes to save them."* King's Cross, p.86.

This woman was a mom who wasn't going to leave until she got help for her girl.

We know Jesus loved children.

He said: *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them..."* Matthew 19:14

I think this is why Jesus' initial response to the woman troubles us.

Matthew 15:23a: Jesus did not answer a word.

Nowhere else in the Gospels does Jesus refuse a direct request to heal; and especially... a request that involved a child.

What he did just doesn't sound like the Jesus we know.

What was going on here????

David Curtis believes that Jesus allowed the woman's pleading to go on in order to reveal to his followers the condition of their hearts... and to teach them an important lesson about compassion.

Matthew 15:23b: So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

What was it that troubled Jesus' disciples?

It wasn't the woman's desperate situation.

We don't read of them urging Jesus to help her.

Jesus wanted his followers, and this includes us, to not only see people, but to feel in our hearts the desperation with which they live and to be moved with compassion for them.

But in this particular case, the response of the disciples revealed their lack of concern. They wanted Jesus to: *"send her away."*

Bob Pierce wrote in his Bible after visiting suffering children on the Korean island of Koje-do: **"Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God."** This impassioned prayer is what guided him as he founded and led the ministry of Samaritan's Purse. <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/our-ministry/history/>

I would say those words capture Jesus' intent for all of his followers, no matter where and when they live. Compassion is to move us to action.

This is why in our vision and mission statement we say: we believe God would have us to be **a church of radical compassion and proclamation.** (I will go!)

The two go hand in hand. It is not one or the other, but both.

This is what James wrote of in chapter 2, verses 14-18.

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.”

How do we do this in Sooke?

Comment on the step to investigate about a Garden/Cooking/Co-op

Let’s press on into the story. v.27.

How do we make sense of Jesus’ response?

In Jesus’ day, to call someone “a dog” was a derogatory term often used by Jews when speaking of Gentiles. And what Gentiles said about Jews was equally “uncomplimentary,” in Tom Wright’s words. Mark for Everyone, p.95.

The word Jesus used for “dogs” in v.27 was unusual.

It is in a diminutive form. You know what that is, right?

Only the people closest to me get to call me Rickie.

You do the same with family or close friends.

With this sense in mind, let’s read v.27 again.

“First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their puppies.” King’s Cross, p.87

This helps, a bit, but we’ve got to dig deeper.

There is still something we are missing.

Jesus said, Matthew 15:24: *“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”*

Jesus primarily focused his public ministry on the people in the nation of Israel.

Matthew 10:5-6 confirms this: *“These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.”*

It’s with this statement Jesus pointed to God’s greater story of salvation.

When Adam and Eve failed, God chose Abraham's family through whom he would bless all peoples on earth – Genesis 12:3.

Abraham's family was to be God's light to the world.

Through them the Rescuer would come.

But like Adam and Eve, they too failed.

Jesus came to complete what the people of Israel had not done.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus would send his followers out from Jerusalem to the nations of the world. But there was an order to how things were being done – first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Romans 1:16 confirms this: “...the gospel... is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

The Jews who were to be a light to the nations, needed themselves to be saved, in order that out from them... would go the news of great joy for all people – that in Jesus there is salvation for everyone who trusts in him.

Because God so loved the world, Jesus came to save us all.

Let's press on into the story. v.27-28.

Timothy Keller suggests that rather than being an insult, what Jesus said to this woman actually was a **parable**: “In a family, the children eat first, not the pets.”

Viewing Jesus response as being a parable, then makes sense of the woman's answer. In essence she said, “*I understand. I'm not from Israel. I get it - I don't have a place at the table. But [I believe that even a crumb of grace from you is] more than enough [to heal my daughter.]*” King's Cross, p.88

In Canada, it is common to hear people demanding that it is their right.... (you fill it in). Don't misinterpret this woman's assertiveness, as being like our culture's insistence on personal rights.

She readily acknowledged to Jesus that she and her daughter were like the dogs under the table. She didn't approach Jesus with the attitude that he owed her. She simply asked him for mercy because she was convinced he was good, powerful and compassionate.

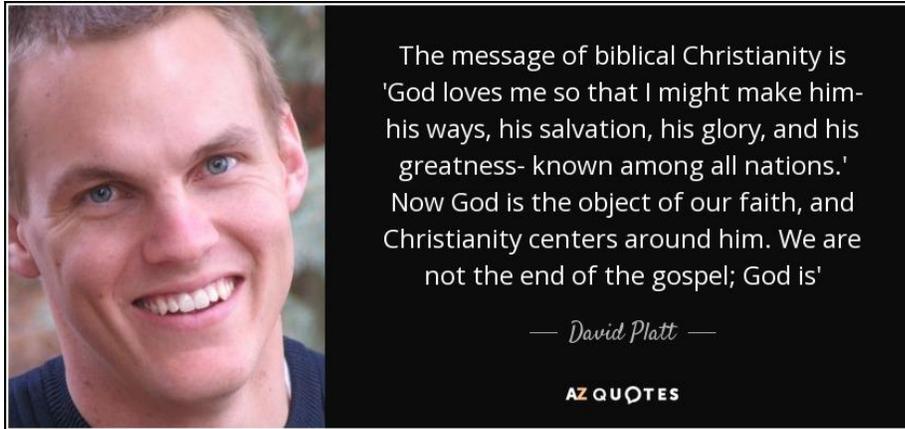
Do you see the difference?

And Jesus didn't heal her daughter because she had a great comeback line – v.29.

Jesus healed her daughter because of the faith expressed in her answer to him. Matthew 15:28 records that Jesus said to her: “*Woman you have great faith!*”

Faith can be as small as a mustard seed.

But it isn't the size of one's faith that saves, but the object trusted.



Do you see this?

It's whom we trust that saves us.

And having come into relationship with God, we now live to make him known.

Recap.

* Mark contrasted the woman with the Pharisees.

Though she didn't know as much as they did, she knew enough to trust Jesus.

Those of you who are considering Jesus, your investigation, your gathering of information and facts, is extremely important, but it will not bring you into relationship with Jesus. At some point, you will have to choose: can I trust Jesus and will I put my life in his hands?

When you get there, will you tell me?

Or when you're ready, and if you want someone to help, call me, I'm available.

* Jesus would have his followers to see people like he sees them.

He would have us be moved by compassion for those he brings into our lives.

We are the hands and feet and voice of Jesus, and through us he loves the people of this world.

May the things that break the heart of God break our hearts.

But not just break them.

May compassion move us to action.

* We are constantly learning the greater story of God's salvation.
It is a story rooted in history.
But it is also a story that continues to be written.
It is also a story that will never end.

* We begin to follow Jesus by faith.
And we never get beyond living by faith in him.
From start to finish - it is by grace we have saved, through faith. Ephesians 2:8

Cheryl you come and sing.
Her song reminds us that God's mercies often come in disguise.
And while God doesn't always do as we ask, nor as we think he should, he always
does what is good.

It was a great need that brought the woman to Jesus.
And she was not disappointed.
Jesus was enough.
He still is – for whatever is before you.

I remind you that Jesus is active to build in each of his followers, a faith that
perseveres; that tenaciously holds onto God, and doesn't let go, confident that he is
holding on to us, and that his grace will always be sufficient.
So hang on. Do not give up.

Jesus pursues after people.
He does because he loves each one of us.
This is why he intersects the lives of his followers with those who don't yet know
him. And those who turn their lives to him; those who receive him and believe in his
name are those who are born of God.

Life Group Questions/Discussion

Additional points of connection

* In interacting with this woman, Jesus showed his followers the greater lesson he wanted them to learn: associating with a Gentile, “a sinner,” doesn’t make a disciple of Jesus unclean.

It was not an easy lesson for them to learn.

In fact, Peter had to be re-taught it years later in Acts 10.

God gave to Peter a vision of a sheet filled with unclean animals. In that vision Peter heard a voice that said, “Kill and eat.” Three times this happened and each time Peter said no. But on the second time the voice said to Peter: *“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”* v.15.

Peter finally got the point when some men showed up and asked him to come with them to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. He told Cornelius, v.28 – *“You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.”*

Just as certain foods don’t make a person unclean, neither does association with a person who doesn’t yet know God.

Jesus was known as the friend of sinners, and he would have his followers be known in the same way. There can be no influence without meaningful contact.

* God does not have favorites.

Romans 2:11: God does not show favoritism.

At the cross of Jesus, the ground is level.

We all come to him the same way.

And once we’ve received him, we are all his children.

* Jesus told her, “the demon has left your daughter.”

But she wasn’t at home to see for herself.

She had to go home trusting that Jesus had told her the truth.

There was a time gap between his promise and her seeing the reality for herself.

Faith takes Jesus at his word.

Jesus’ followers don’t live just by sight; we live by faith.

* Jesus was careful not to be sidetracked.

While he interacted with this woman, and he would head into the Decapolis next, the mission of the cross remained his priority.

Jesus' example teaches us to stay focused on the main thing.

We believe God would have us be a church of radical compassion and proclamation. Not one or the other. We speak the gospel with our mouths and our lives.

“Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary,” is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi—founder of the Franciscan Order—and is intended to say that proclaiming the Gospel by example is more virtuous than actually proclaiming it with one's voice. The spirit behind it can be a little arrogant, intimating that those who “practice the Gospel” are more faithful to the faith than those who preach it.

But here's the fact: Francis never said such a thing. None of his disciples, or biographers have these words coming from his mouth. It doesn't show up in any of his writings.” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/factchecker-misquoting-francis-of-assisi>

See Romans 10:12-15; Acts 10:38

* The woman realized she had no claim on Jesus.

But neither do any of us.

God is not in our debt; he is not obligated to us.

The woman asked Jesus for mercy; she begged for what she didn't deserve.

Do you see the difference?

Jesus a few days earlier had made it clear in a teaching, that the human heart is what's wrong in the world.

It is not an easy thing to receive God's assessment that we are spiritually dead; that we can't rescue ourselves.

The issue is not about making a bad person good.

The issue is that all of us are spiritually dead.

Just like the woman had no ability to rid her daughter of that demon; none of us has the ability to make ourselves live spiritually.

She needed help beyond herself; just as we do. And she believed Jesus was that help. This is what it means to put one's faith in Jesus.

Mark 7:31-37.

In what ways did Jesus deal with the man differently than with the woman?
Why did Jesus do this?

See John 11.

Why did Jesus do what he did when he received Mary and Martha's request?
When he came why did he rebuke Martha and cry with Mary?

Respond to this statement: Jesus always give us what we need. In fact, he knows better than we do what it is we need.

Isaiah 9:b - he is the Wonderful Counselor...

v.34 - why did Jesus sigh deeply?

What did it mean?

Did healing cost Jesus - emotionally, physically, spiritually?

v.32 - "deaf and could hardly talk" is a single Greek word - moglilalos

It is only used in the Bible, here in Mark 7:32 and Isaiah 35:4-6.

Timothy Keller says it is a very rare word and Mark would have had no reason to use it unless he wanted us to cross-reference with the Isaiah passage.

What is the point Mark is wanting to make?

Respond to this statement:

"On the cross, the Child of God was thrown away, cast away from the table without a crumb, so that those of us who are not children of God could be adopted and brought in. Put another way, the Child had to become a dog so that we could become sons and daughters at the table. He became mute so that our tongues can be loosed to call him King.

You are not beyond healing. You are not too unworthy. While you are more sinful than you know, you are more loved than you imagine."

Kings Cross, p.94

