

Includes
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Mark 7:24-37

Opening: Here's a little exercise to get us thinking about Jesus. Fill in the blank, "JESUS IS _____."

This past week I was in Washington, D.C. for a series of meetings. One day was spent on Capitol Hill with appointments with Members of Congress and their staff to discuss issues important to our industry (a.k.a. "lobbying" them.) It was a hectic time to be there with a potential government shutdown looming. Getting time with Congressmen and Senators is always a "fluid" endeavor because everyone wants time with them and things change on a moment's notice. Still, if a Member of Congress wants to serve constituents (and be re-elected) they strive to make themselves available. [Examples - Back to our fill in the blank]

Jesus' miracles made Him so in-demand that He and His apostles could hardly rest or have a meal. Last week we talked about desperate people; desperate people are also determined people. When desperate people heard about Jesus' compassion, mercy, and power, He could run but He couldn't hide. That's the setting for today's text as Jesus went beyond social and ethnic boundaries to minister to two people the religious establishment would have ignored.

The point: Jesus is AVAILABLE to ANYONE. More precisely, SALVATION through Jesus is AVAILABLE to ANYONE, anywhere, at anytime.

Mark 7:24–37 (ESV) — **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 Syrophenician 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."

- Why would this woman have been unlikely to receive help from a Jewish Rabbi or the Jewish religious establishment?
- What are things that often keep some people from turning to Jesus?
- What social and ethnic barriers was this woman climbing over for help?
- Matthew's account of this incident gives us some additional color:

Matthew 15:22–25 (ESV) — **22** And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." **23** But he did not answer her a

word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” **24** He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” **25** But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.”

- Look at the language of her plea! Look at how she addressed Jesus compared to how the Pharisees treated Him.
- What do you admire about how she interacted with Jesus?
- In 1966 The Temptations had a hit called, “Ain’t Too Proud to Beg.” I thought of that song when I read this woman’s approach to Jesus. From the same era, “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough”, (no valley low enough, no river wide enough to keep me from you.) [Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell]
- This woman was NOT too proud to BEG for what her daughter needed!
- Nothing was going to keep her from Jesus!
- Desperation became determination and DEPENDENCY on God’s Son.
- When we read this passage, Jesus’ response is always jarring. The NLT renders it: *“First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews. It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.”ⁱ*
- Let’s talk about that shocking word, “dogs.” Swindoll writes, *“Hebrews frequently referred to Gentiles as dogs, using a term describing dirty (and ceremonially unclean) street mongrels. Presumably, Jesus spoke to this woman in Greek [she lived as a Greek], and He softened the image by using the word kynarion [2952], which means “little dog” or “puppy,” perhaps referring to a house pet. Even so, it’s unsettling to think of God’s Son referring to any person as a dog.”ⁱⁱ*
- The all-knowing, all loving Son of God appears to be testing her faith and giving her an opening. The Message paraphrase: *“The children get fed first. If there’s any left over, the dogs get it.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- How could her response to Jesus’ shocking statement have gone badly?
- Not only was this determined Mom not dissuaded, she was a debater!
- First she acknowledged Jesus’ point that salvation came to the Jews first (Romans 1:16), then she proved she understood what most Jews couldn’t see: *“Of course, Master. But don’t dogs under the table get scraps dropped by the children?”^{iv}*
- “Jesus, I know you are a Jew and you came to the Jews but I recognize that you are powerful enough that I only need the ‘scraps’ from the table to solve my problem!”
- Why would Jesus have been impressed by that response?

29 And he said to her, “For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.”

- Matthew tells us about another Gentile, a Roman Centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant from a distance.
- He said, *“I’m not worthy to have you come to my home, Jesus. You are so powerful I know if you just say the word, my servant will be healed.”*

- Jesus said, *“Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.”^v*
- Warren Wiersbe writes, *“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 (Matt. 8:5–13).”^{vi}*
- Back to the faith-filled, desperate and determined Mom.

30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

- Quoting Swindoll again about this woman: *“Even when rebuffed, she didn’t sulk or storm off, declaring God uncaring and cruel. Moreover, she showed no sense of entitlement, no expectation that Jesus should heal her daughter. On the contrary, she appealed for mercy. And owing her nothing, Jesus extended grace.”^{vii}*
- Other thoughts about how this woman pursued Jesus?
- Jesus wasn’t done ministering to unlikely people during this trip.

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. **32** And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. **33** And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. **34** And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” **35** And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. **36** And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. **37** And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

- Scripture doesn’t specifically say this man was a Gentile, but the Decapolis (Greek for 'Ten Cities') was a group of ten Hellenistic cities so clearly this took place in Gentile territory.
- Key point in verse 32: *“And they brought to him a man...and begged.”*
- Just like the desperate and determined Gentile Mom in this text, and like the four friends in Mark 2 who lowered their paralyzed friend down through the ceiling while Jesus was teaching, these friends “brought” this man to Jesus and were not too proud to “beg” Jesus to touch and heal him.
- We need to bring people to Jesus by sharing the gospel with them.
- We need to beg Him to have mercy on them as we pray for their salvation.
- We think of Paul as God’s missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15) but, as one commentator points out: *“He was only following the model of the Savior, for Jesus also went to the Gentiles even though His primary focus was to preach the gospel to the Jewish people.”^{viii}*
- The Jewish religious leaders avoided Gentiles but Jesus met their needs.
- Those who hate the things of Christ or just misunderstand Christians say we are not inclusive. If they really study the life of Jesus they will see that Jesus’ offer of salvation is totally inclusive and non-discriminatory.

- God extends blessings to every person. We call that “common grace” with examples like enjoying your family, great food, or a beautiful sunset.
- While the blessings of common grace are wonderful, what we all need is saving grace that is given to those who trust Christ as Savior and Lord.
- The offer of God's mercy and grace is for anyone.

Acts 10:34 (ESV) — 34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, [in the KJV: “God is no respecter of persons”^{ix}]

Jesus said in **John 10:15–16 (ESV) — 15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Romans 10:12–13 (ESV) — 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. **13** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Salvation in Christ is AVAILABLE to ANYONE ANYWHERE who confesses their sin, their need for a Savior, and trusts Him as Lord.

So What's the Takeaway?

- If you haven't surrendered your life to Jesus as Savior and Lord, what is getting in the way? Is it pride (too proud to beg God's Son for mercy and forgiveness), is it belief that you are either “good enough” or NOT good enough; do you feel unworthy or are you just not desperate enough?
- Jesus isn't put off by any of that. He's waiting patiently for you to come just as you are no matter your background or past life.
- Those of us who ARE followers of Christ, need to be like the friends of the deaf and mute man who connected him with Jesus.
- We need to bring people to Jesus by sharing the gospel with them.
- We need to beg Him to have mercy on them as we pray for their salvation.
- We must make sure they understand that Jesus is AVAILABLE to ANYONE, and that salvation through Him is available to anyone anywhere, at anytime.

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mk 7:27). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱ Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Mark (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (p. 197). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition

ⁱⁱⁱ Peterson, E. H. (2005). [The Message: the Bible in contemporary language](#) (Mk 7:27). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

^{iv} Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Mk 7:28). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

^v *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Mt 8:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vi} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 136). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vii} Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Mark (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (p. 198). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

^{viii} <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/healing-deaf-man>

^{ix} *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ac 10:34). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.