



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A Dog, A Demon and A Deaf Dude (Mark 7:24-37)

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Paul Meinsen / PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102 / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

For the interim session, we plan to meet most Wednesdays during the 12noon-1pm lunch hour in House Hearing Room #6. I hope you are able to make many of our studies. We plan to pick up where we left off last year in the Gospel of Mark.

By walking through the book of Mark, my hope has been that one's knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, has grown (2 Peter 3:18). And out of that growth in knowledge: a fuller worship of God and Christ, a greater love for Him and one another, a more steadfast faith, and a stronger desire to become more and more like Him—since that is the goal and desire for all His followers (Phil 2:5).

Now, before examining today's text of Mark 7:24-37, lets first take a look at a note in Matthew. In Matthew 12:17-21, Jesus had just engaged in a confrontation with the Pharisees regarding Jesus' views on the Sabbath Day; which concerned the oral "traditions of the elders" that the Pharisees slavishly kept and expected others to keep. Knowing they wanted to destroy Him (12:16), He goes elsewhere to preach and minister; and He heals and gives warning for people not to tell what He is doing.

Then Matthew adds this note:

Matthew 12:17-21 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASSED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS. A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY. AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE."

It is important to remember this compassion of Christ as we enter into our passage today. In Mark 7, he had just written about Jesus' confrontation and strong words toward the religious elite of Israel. Jesus called them hypocrites—saying they worship God with their lips, but their hearts are far from God. He said they really don't honor or obey the Law (which they say they love) because they obey their own man-made rules. And worse, by these

rules, they keep others from being able to obey them. Jesus goes on to inform the crowds and His disciples that the problem is not eating defiled foods, but rather that the defilement is already in their hearts.

After this confrontation, He leaves the area (Mark 7:24). He is less than a year from His crucifixion and many things still need to be taught to those who will become His Apostles. But even in the Gentile region of Tyre, He cannot hide.

So instead of spending time with His men, Jesus has to deal with a number of situations. His actions in these situations are quite unusual and in our society quite rude and uncultured. But as we will see, Jesus was not rude but rather He showed much mercy and compassion.

In this study, we are going to walk through this passage as Jesus deals with a dog, a demon and a deaf dude. In it, we will see the compassion and mercy of Christ, even to the "undeserved". Therefore, we may know what we, the "undeserved", will find as we come to Him; as well as, know how we should also treat other "undeserved" around us.

JESUS DEALS WITH A DOG (7:25-27)

As Jesus tries to get away, He is found. And the first thing He has to deal with is a dog. That's not my label; it's His.

Mark 7:24-37 Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

To grasp this seemingly cruel comment by Jesus, we must first understand the comment. There are two different New Testament Greek words translated "dog". One describes the mongrels that ran in packs, ate garbage and dead stuff. The second word, used by Jesus in this statement, refers to household pets (still not much of a complement).

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A Dog, A Demon, and A Deaf Dude (Mark 7:24-37)

The Hebrews had several metaphorical purposes for the word “dog”. It was associated with things which were unclean (Exodus 22:31; 1 Kings 21:23; 22:38; 2 Kings 9:36). One’s death was considered dishonorable if the body was not buried but rather eaten by dogs; such as in Jezebel’s death in 2 Kings 9:10. It was a term used for people who were judged to be wicked and useless because of their wickedness (2 Samuel 16:9; Isaiah 56:10-11). This was Paul’s term judgment of those who did evil by attempting to discredit him in the eyes of the believers (Philippians 3:2).

So was Jesus referring this woman as evil, wicked and in opposition to Him; except He was nice because He used the less harsh term? What was Jesus trying to teach and do?

The first item to note is that Jesus was reassuring the disciples that He has not abandoned His mission to the nation of Israel. In Matthew’s record of this incident, he includes Jesus answer to the disciples, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). In saying this, Jesus let them know that He has not given up His work in Israel. The disciples could think this for they left Israel after the bitter discussion with the Jewish leaders (Mark 7:1-23) and entered this Gentile area. Could Jesus have given up on the hard-hearted Jews? He assures them, with this statement that His mission is still first for the people to whom He was sent.

Jesus Christ was the Messiah of Israel. Israel was still God’s chosen people and Jesus’ mission was to them first. The time of Gentiles will come, but not at this time. This understanding can be seen in Peter’s sermon, “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you” (Acts 3:26a). It can also be seen as church started first in Jerusalem and then expanded all over the earth. It is visible in Paul’s journeys. He typically went to Jewish synagogue to teach first; then to Gentiles after being rejected by the Jewish synagogue leaders.

With these things in mind, Mark 7:27 (“Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”) becomes clearer. The children (Israel) must be served before the dogs (Gentiles). It is implied here that after the children, the dogs will be served and not ignored. It would have been inappropriate for God to ignore His own people to bless the Gentiles. His promises were to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They came through David and the prophets. They would be unfulfilled and void if the Gentiles were blessed first before the Israelites.

While Jesus was assuring the disciples that His mission to the Jewish nation had not been abandoned, He was also using these words to reveal the faith she had in Him. In confessing her trust in Him, Jesus then honors her request by dealing with the demon that was torturing her daughter.

JESUS DEALS WITH A DEMON (7:28-30)

Mark 7:28-30 But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.

Many times already, Jesus’ authority over the demonic world has been proven. In Mark’s Gospel alone, He reported Jesus casting a demon out of a man who showed up at the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:23-28). Mark said that is was a general aspect of Jesus’ ministerial work (1:34). He remarked that the demons themselves cried out in submission to Jesus (3:11). And Jesus sent a “legion” of demons into a herd of pigs (5:1-15).

In fact, Jesus’ enemies could not refute His work. Therefore, they came up with the false charge that Jesus could do these things because He Himself “has Beelzebub” and that “by the ruler of the demons He casts out demons” (3:22).

SHE KEPT ASKING UNTIL SHE RECEIVED, SEEKING UNTIL SHE FOUND, AND KNOCKING UNTIL IT WAS OPENED TO HER.
--JOHN MACARTHUR

While neither the miracle and authority over demons were new, the method Jesus used was quite different. First of all, this healing was done at a distance. This is the only time in Mark’s work that Jesus healed someone who was not next to Him. Secondly, there were no words, commands nor dialogue with the demons. After the woman expressed her faith with the comment about the “crumbs from the table”, Jesus simply said “Go home. It has been taken care of.” (my loose paraphrase). Matthew records Jesus words, “...it shall be done for you as you wish.’ And her daughter was healed at once” (Matthew 15:28a).

Missouri

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Please note here: The woman's words showed her faith in Him. But it was a great act of faith to go home (Mark 7:30). She trusted Him to have accomplished what He said had been done. Therefore, she obeyed and went home.

The miracle was nothing new. The method of performing the miracle, though was new; never done before. But the reason **why** Jesus performed this miracle is consistent with His being--He shows much compassion on those who believe.

The words that Jesus drew out of the woman with His seemingly heartless and cold remark revealed many things about her. They showed her humility; desperate people are not proud toward others.

They showed her understanding of Jesus' metaphor. It is doubtful that she fully understood all the history that stood behind Jesus' words. But it is true that while Israel was God's chosen people, Gentiles had always received some blessings throughout the Old Testament period; as seen in the lives of Rahab in Jericho, Ruth the Moabite, Naaman the Aramean and King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon.

The words revealed her faith. After her comment, Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish" (Matthew 15:28). Jesus knew the hearts of people (John 2:24-25). Thus, He was drawing out the faith He knew she had for all to see.

Jesus does not provide a pattern for His miraculous work (as will be seen in the next section), but there is a pattern for the reason of His miracles: **the people who came to Him with the faith that He could hear--He healed:**

- the leper in Mark 1
- the paralytic and his four friends in Mark 2
- the woman with the 12 year flow of blood in Mark 5
- Jarius, whose daughter Jesus raised from the dead in Mark 5 (only to name a few).

Jesus responded to the great faith of this Gentile woman by honoring her request. Continuing in this passage in Mark, one can see more of those crumbs that fall from the table of the master.

JESUS DEALS WITH A DEAF DUDE (7:31-37)

Mark 7: 31-37 Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him. Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva; and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly. And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Once again, the people find Jesus. But do not pass over the location, "within the region of Decapolis" (7:31). This is the same region in which Jesus casted the legion of demons into the herd of pigs (Mark 5:1-17). After that miracle, the people feared Jesus and "implored" Jesus to leave them (5:17). This time, they "implored" Him to heal the man who was deaf (7:32).

Mark also described the man as one who "spoke with difficulty." The word translated "spoke with difficulty" is the same as the translated word from Hebrew found in the prophecy: *Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy* (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Jesus honored their request with some weird actions. First, He removed the man from the crowd. Then, He inserted His fingers into the man's ears and with saliva on His finger, Jesus touched the man's tongue. These odd actions could simply have been a way for the man to understand what Jesus was about to do with Him. And then after a moment's sigh and a verbal command, the man could hear and speak plainly.

There are two quick notes to point as we read the record of this event. One is that Jesus never set a pattern for healing. There was no magic word or action that would do the "trick". Jesus healed by touching a person, by commanding a person, over an extended distance, by having someone touch

Missouri

A Dog, A Demon, and A Deaf Dude (Mark 7:24-37)

His clothes and by simply telling someone that it has been done. No one can simply “copy” the words and actions of Jesus and think they have found the magic formula--He did not supply one for the power was in His person, not in His pattern.

The second note is Jesus’ continued disdain for the religious, cultural taboos in the land of Palestine in His day. It was commonly thought, by the Jews, that if you had physical problems, then you were out of favor with God and unclean. Jesus constantly broke this wrong belief by touching those considered dirty by society’s standards. Jesus truly was a man of compassion: *A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT...*

As in the case of all of Jesus’ miracles, this healing was also immediate, complete and irrefutable.

After dealing with the deaf dude, Jesus then turned to the people and commanded them to remain quiet. But they do not pay heed. In their zeal, they say great and true things about Him, but they still are being disobedient to His wishes. In chapter 8:1, the result of the widespread proclamation draws a large crowd of people who did not bring their lunch when they came to see the miracle-worker. But Jesus will use this, once again, to show His great compassion.

CONCLUSION

Jesus’ plans were interrupted (again) but yet He showed much mercy, compassion and power. He responded with mercy as He drew out the great faith He saw in the heart of a Gentile woman who kept pleading with Him. He showed much compassion on a deaf Gentile man by drawing him aside and applying a loving touch; as odd it may seem to us. And great power was again shown as He answered the requests brought to Him.

Friend, we all have much to learn from Jesus Christ. You cannot perform such miraculous feats, but you can do something much more important—you can show mercy and love toward someone that “may not be deserving.” Be reminded that none of us are “deserving”. None of us are without sin and having sin makes us disqualified for any of God’s blessings. But remember Jesus’ example. Remember the mercy shown to you. Let each on be known as a people of mercy. To the glory and honor of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Listen friend, whether you know it or not, you are in a desperate situation—more so that the woman with a demon-possessed daughter or someone who is deaf and dumb. If you are not a Christian, you are worse than a “dog,” you are a sin-filled rebel against the God of the universe and the condemnation of eternal hell is the sentence upon you.

Can the situation be changed?—Yes!! How?—By following the lead of this woman today. Humble yourself, repent, have faith and trust in Christ and you will find Him compassionate to forgive and to give eternal life. You see, Jesus’ mission was to come and to seek and save that which is lost; that which is filled with sin and rebellion. And He did this by dying as the sacrifice that appeased God against whom you rebelled.

There is nothing you can do to change your sentence. No amount of good works, prayers, offerings, church services, religious zealosity or good intentions will please God so as to release you from the charges. Your only recourse is to have Jesus pay for your crimes against God. It is the only way for forgiveness, salvation and eternal life with God. I plead with you today to go to Him in repentance and faith. The Gentile woman and the deaf man both found Him compassionate to heal; you will find Him compassionate to forgive.

God can forgive your sins, are you interested?