

## Mark 7:24-30

### “Mercy to ministry”

#### I. Introduction

#### II. Vs. 24-30 He could not be hidden

##### I. Introduction

By placing the first 23 verses of chapter 7 next to verses 24-37 Mark wants to show the benefits of Jesus’ administration when compared to the traditions of the religious establishment. Paul the apostle who had once in his own words described himself as a Pharisee of Pharisees commented to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinth 3:17 “*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*” The needs of the people both gentile and Jew would have remained un-transformed if Jesus operated within the traditions of the elders. But because He acted in line with the word of God and rejected the traditions of the elders He was free to move in the needs and hurts of those that were open to His touch. Mark offers up two examples of this: First in verses 24-30 as he shows that Jesus and His disciples moved to Tyre and Sidon and next week we will look at in verses 31-37 as Jesus heal the deaf in the gentile area of Decapolis.

##### II. Vs. 24-30 He could not be hidden

Vs. 24-25 Matthew informs us that the woman who addressed Jesus was a gentile both of which would have disqualified her from ministry had Jesus upheld the traditions of the elders. Jesus left the region of Galilee and crossed the border some 60 miles to Tyre and Sidon, gentile country. They inhabited the area of the Canaanite’s but were Phoenician by nationality and Greek by religion and speech. They had started out as trades people builders and artisans. And from this they acquired great wealth and that had further led

them into idolatry. They were the hated enemies of the Jews and the feeling was mutual. They worship Asherah the god of nature and other Greek gods. The contrast couldn't be more obvious as Mark points out from Jesus teaching against the traditions of elders he left the Jewish area and went directly to a gentile area and into a home there. There seems to be a theme in terms of the use of analogies as Jesus had just spoken in terms of food not being a defilement agent and here we see that Jesus illustrated this by going into an unclean person's region and home to minister to the need. The analogy is clear, we all have folks, that we just can't "*stomach*". Oh we may say we do have any prejudices but we can like the Pharisees declare someone off limits, untouchable. They are "unclean" something we just don't have a taste for but not so with Jesus He came to seek and save that which was lost. What He couldn't stomach was the hearts of those who refused to reach out to people. Marks gospel tells us that upon arriving into this region "**He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden.**" He could not be hidden for this woman's need drew Him forth.

I wonder if Jesus seeking solitude from the continual interrogation from the religious delegation sought places like Tyre and Sidon knowing that their traditions would keep them from coming? It also would provide a teaching moment in His disciples as they would be witnesses that such action on His part in correlation with His teaching was not just religious platitudes and theory as clearly He put it into practice. This woman came to Jesus in her desperation because she had "*heard about Him*". Jesus knew that there was a gentile woman, with false ideas about God. She had grown up raised on a host of false deities, perhaps she was faithful to those ideals and now a crisis has come into her life her daughter has been severally possessed by a demon. Her concepts of god,

her religious works avail nothing. Yet, she has heard of this Jesus and even though it goes against her religion and all of her prejudice she comes to Him. Folks, He traveled 60 miles to meet this woman and in so doing He broke religious barrier with the gospel. Do you realize that this is the first recorded gentile convert? She is not coming for herself she is coming for her daughter. Jesus came not to destroy her faith, but to develop it.

Note: ***The contrast between the Pharisees and scribes and this woman***: They had come to him traveling 60 miles to argue tradition above relationship. Jesus had traveled 60 miles because there was a woman wanting relationship above her traditions. I believe that all people are religious and they all have to overcome those religious traditions of their lives to come to Christ.

Vs. 26 Yet with that said these comments by Jesus towards this woman seem to be derogatory, why did Jesus treat her so harshly. Matthew tells us that she first came to Jesus asking Him to do something about her severely demon-possessed daughter.

According to Matthew's account this woman keeps on crying out to the Lord so much so that the disciple's say; "*Hey, Lord do something that she may go away!*" To be honest I'm not so sure that I would not have said the same thing. This is the second time they have asked the Lord to send needy people away.

A.) "***Have mercy.***" Nothing wrong with this it ought to be the cry of every soul in distress. It speaks from the human side of being unworthy and from God's side as being greater than any other thing.

B.) "***Son of David.***" Of the 16 times you find this phrase in the gospels this is the only time in which it is uttered by a gentile. This term was used exclusively by Jews as a messianic term and when applied towards Jesus it was an acknowledgement that He is the long awaited for Messiah. This phrase is something that no gentile would have used or known anything about. It is obvious that she had heard this term used by Jews of Him and wanted to address him religiously in hopes that the correct terminology would grant her what she requested. But as Mark informs us with such a religious traditional response, Jesus has not a word to say.

At first glance this seems to be a bit harsh, a desperate woman trying to save her child, trying to say the right things to get Him to respond in mercy to her need. “*And He has nothing to say?*” Do you ever feel like this? Do you ever have a pressing need and you do all the right things to get God to respond and nothing? May I suggest to you that Jesus will never respond to traditional religious formulas no matter how correct and truthful they are. **Jesus is not a theological conviction, He is not a creed you recite, He is a person!**

Think of it in human terms: You go to the person you want to marry and you propose, pulling out a piece of paper you recite a standard traditional phrase.... “*Roses are red, violates are blue, will you marry me and I’ll love you too.*” No, that’s not how you communicate to the person you love instead you pour out your heart to them, you become vulnerable.

Vs.27 Jesus response to her is based upon her initial approach as He in essence tells her that; “*If you are approaching me based upon religion and tradition then I will answer you only upon religion and tradition.*” There were according to religious tradition three things against this mother:

- 1.) She was a woman
- 2.) She was a Canaanite
- 3.) She had not made a good impression upon the disciple’s

But she had two things that set her apart: ***She was determined and she had come to the right person, albeit the wrong way!*** Matthew then tells us that upon Jesus rejection of her initial approach that ***she did three things that came natural for her and it is this that moved her past the religious barriers:***

A.) **She worshipped Him**: The word worship means to turn and kiss, like your dog does on your hand. It is a spontaneous sign of great affection. Where religious formulas failed spontaneous affection worked.

B.) **She changed her words**: She didn't call Him by what those Jewish people would have she called to Him based upon her heart felt need; "Lord".

C.) **She shortened her need**: There was no shopping list, no do this my way. No, just "help me." This is one of the three shortest prayer recorded in the Bible. Peter had just cried out "*Lord save me.*" Now we see this woman cry out, "*Lord, help me.*". Then finally you will here the thief on the cross cry out, "*Lord, remember me.*"

1.) "Lord save me."

2.) "Lord, help me."

3.) "Lord, remember me."

All of these got an immediate response. We don't need to impress the Lord, He want's us to cut to the heart of our need.

At first glance Jesus calling her a little dog seems quite harsh especially when we note that the Jews had a word for dogs as they called them "goy". They were kind of like wolfs or coyotes; vicious animals that traveled around in packs attacking farm animals and little children. In the Hebrew language there are no swear words. Instead they would use words that spoke of things that they didn't like and apply them other things they didn't care for. And this is the case with the word "**goy**" as they called gentiles "**goyim**". **It was a racial slur a dirty word calling them vicious dogs.** But that is not what Jesus calls her, as our English translation renders it "*little dogs*". I have no doubt that this mother was familiar with the term and had been called it many a time and Jesus changes the word to another word for dog as it described a little puppy that was part of the family. Vs. 28-30 She understood Jesus choice of words and what they were trying to convey and doesn't argue her unworthiness to receive mercy, she only asks for the crumbs that would fall from the table. In those days there were no eating utensils neither were there any napkins, eating was a messy proposition. They would save a piece of bread or two for after the meal and would use it to clean their face and hands, then they would just throw that piece of bread to the little four legged family member under the table. That is what

her view of herself and the gentiles as she asks the Lord to deal with her on her low estate, right where she is at.

I can just picture a smile breaking out on His face as Matthew tells us He spays to her: "*Woman*" which is a Hebrew word "goo-nay" and it is used as a term of endearment, the same word Jesus used to address His mother. It is also the word used when a person would speak to their wife, today we would say, "Dear". Jesus marveled at her trust in Him as her faith had over come religion and prejudice, silence and disappointment. She had come through all of that and received what she had longed for.