



WEEK 2 STUDY GUIDE

Monday, May 2, 2022

Read: Mark 7:24-37

Scripture Verse: *“Soon a woman heard about him. An evil spirit controlled her little daughter. The woman came to Jesus and fell at his feet.” Mark 7:25*

Today's Thought:

Jesus and the disciples have been working the region of Galilee vigorously for days and are desperate for a break. Purposely, Jesus leads them out of Capernaum and deep into the area of Phoenicia, into Tyre and Sidon. These areas were deeply and distinctively pagan. He chose to enter these areas hoping that because no one knew him, He would be able to find a place to rest under the people's radar. Tired from the people's excitement, the constant bitterness of the Pharisees, the suspicions of Herod Antipas, and the doubts of his disciples, Jesus sought rest.

As Jesus entered this Gentile territory, he went into a house, hoping that no one had seen him so He could rest. However, that wasn't the case. His presence in the community could not be kept secret. Not long after His arrival, a Greek woman heard Jesus was in town and, because she had a daughter filled with an evil spirit, went to Jesus for help. We will discuss issues concerning the interaction between Jesus and this woman on another day. Today, I want to discuss their initial meeting and how she approached Jesus.

Like the Gerasene demoniac, Jarius, the synagogue ruler, and the woman with the issue of blood, this Gentile woman, living outside the bounds of Israel, came to Jesus and threw herself at his feet. She, too, had a need, a daughter with an unclean spirit. Like many of us, she had many obstacles blocking her way to Jesus. Having heard of Jesus, nothing would stop this concerned mother from getting to him for help. Look at the challenges she had to overcome. She was a Greek, a Gentile, and Jesus was a Jew. Besides that, she was a woman in a society dominated by men. Satan was against her, and one of his demons had control of her daughter. The disciples were against her asking Jesus to send her away so He could rest. As we will see later, it even looked like Jesus was against her. Yet, with all that, this brave and determined Gentile woman came to Jesus and threw herself at His feet.

I don't want to oversimplify the situation, but before we get too deep into the story, I want you to notice what this woman did, and it's precisely what you and I need to do when we approach Jesus. Knowing all the things she was up against, this woman looked past them and, in humble respect, fell at Jesus' feet. What an expression of deep respect, not to mention the personal grief she was feeling for her daughter's condition. Sometimes when we face troubles in this life, the only thing we can do is fall at the Savior's feet. The earlier demoniac did. Jarius did. The woman with the issue of blood also fell at Jesus' feet, humbly seeking His help. In every one of those instances, after falling at Jesus' feet, He answered their requests because of their humble faith. He will do the same for us.

- Why did Jesus and the disciples head into this pagan territory?
- What were they seeking rest from?
- What does this woman have in common with the Gerasene demoniac, Jarius, and the woman with the issue of blood?
- What are the obstacles that seem to be blocking her way to Jesus?
- What are some obstacles that block us from going to Jesus?
- What is the common result for those who come humbly and throw themselves at the feet of Jesus?

Further Reading: Matthew 15:21-22

Tuesday, May 3, 2022

Read: Mark 7:24-37

Scripture Verse: *"She was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. "First let the children eat all they want," he told her. "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to their dogs."*
Mark 7:26-27

Today's Thought:

Nowhere else in the Gospel of Mark does a woman have more strikes against her than this Gentile woman when it came to approaching Jesus. Ignoring every cultural norm, she begged Jesus to drive an evil spirit out of her daughter. You must give her credit; she's brave and determined plus shows an incredible love for her daughter and a deep faith and respect for Jesus.

Check out Jesus' response to this woman. His response seems odd at best and, at first glance, almost insulting, which is out of character for Jesus. Part of the issue is we have a poor Gentile woman in distress who approaches Jesus as a stranger to the Jewish commonwealth, a Greek outsider to the covenant promises of Israel, who has no part in the Jewish faith traditions yet has heard about Jesus.

As we look at the response there seems to be a harshness to Jesus' words to this woman that tends to leave us a bit uncomfortable as we read them. Let me be very clear here that in no way does ethnicity play any role when it comes to status in God's house. However, in those days, Jews used "dogs" as a derogative term for Gentiles. They were considered "dirty mutts" who searched the streets for garbage.

The clue we need to see in discovering what Jesus was saying to the woman can be found in verse 27, where Jesus begins his response with the word "first." This word "first" leaves open the idea of later ministry to the Gentiles. Although it looks like an insult to the woman, Jesus was expressing to her the order of his mission which was first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Jesus' mission and his role were first as the Jewish Messiah and then as Savior of the world and yet, He commended the persistent faith of this "Gentile" woman who knew there must be a place for her in God's plan of grace.

Jesus' point is that anyone's concern is always to feed his family first. The Jews were God's chosen family, His special family, and they would receive the choice morsels of truth before anyone else. The good news is the woman was not offended; she was delighted. She knew if she was this close to God, she had a right to the crumbs from His table. This woman had such a grateful attitude compared to the Pharisees, who were not even willing to sit at the table of truth with Jesus. Due to her attitude of gratitude, Jesus had mercy on this woman and her daughter.

It is the same for us today; when we are willing to throw ourselves at the feet of Christ and confident enough to place ourselves into his arms, He provides all the grace we need. For those who humble themselves and throw themselves at the feet of Christ, mercy is given! One of the greatest blessings we have as parents is the privilege to ask God to break the power of Satan in the lives of our children, just like this woman. The prayer of every parent should be that Jesus makes their children temples of the Holy Spirit and that he would dwell in them.

- What do you notice about the text? Be specific with your list.
- With all that was against her what did the woman do? If you were her, would you have done the same or responded differently?
- What was your initial response to Jesus' words in verse 27?
- How does the woman react to Jesus' statement? Were you surprised?
- What do you learn about Jesus? What do you learn from the woman?

Further Reading: Mark 3:35; Isaiah 35:5; Acts 13:46

Wednesday, May 4, 2022

Read: Mark 7:24–37

Scripture Verse: *“Then he told her, “That was a good reply. You may go. The demon has left your daughter.” So she went home and found her child lying on the bed. And the demon was gone.” Mark 7:29–30*

Today’s Thought:

By Faith Not Sight

Sometimes I’m sad, I know not why
My heart is sore distressed;
It seems the burdens of this world
Have settled on my heart.

And yet I know ... I know that God
Who doeth all things right
Will lead me thus to understand
To walk by FAITH ... not SIGHT.

And though I may not see the way
He’s planned for me to go,
The way seems dark to me just
But oh, I’m sure He knows!

Today He guides my feeble step
Tomorrows in His right ...
He has asked me to never fear ...
But walk by FAITH ... not SIGHT.

Someday the mists will roll away,
The sun will shine again.
I’ll see the beauty in the flowers,
I’ll hear the bird’s refrain,

And then I’ll know my Father’s hand
Has led the way to light
Because I placed my hand in His
And walked by FAITH ... not SIGHT."

—Ruth A. Morgan

As Mark wraps up this short story, I can't help but marvel at this woman's faith. In her reply to Jesus, she reveals the strength of her faith that Jesus will do what she has requested. And her faith has brought her victory. In no way was she attempting to put her daughter or herself before God's chosen, nor did she want to usurp the order of His mission. All this mother wanted was a few crumbs as they fell from the table of blessing; she knows that Salvation is of the Jews. Oh, the joy that must have filled her heart as she took Jesus' words and used them to voice her request. She accepted her place and believed His Word, and Jesus not only met her needs but commended her for her faith.

"Lord, increase our faith." Great faith is established when we can take God at His Word and never let go until He meets our needs. It is with great faith that the slightest glimmer of hope can be turned into a fulfilled promise of God.

- What do you need God to do for you right now that needs persistent faith?
- How are you encouraged by this woman's faith?
- This woman knew her place and Jesus answered. What is our place if we want to receive the answers to our requests? (Think demoniac, Jarius, etc)

Further Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

Thursday, May 5, 2022

Read: Mark 7:31-37

Scripture Verse: *"There some people brought a man to him. The man was deaf and could hardly speak. They begged Jesus to place his hand on him." Mark 7:32*

Today's Thought:

Jesus and his disciples have left Tyre and traveled through Sidon to another Gentile area known as the Ten Cities, the region of Decapolis. When Jesus arrived there, a group of people brought a man to him. We immediately notice the difference in how these people approach Jesus for their friend versus how the woman in Tyre came to Jesus. She came to Jesus for her daughter and threw herself at his feet, and Jesus granted her request without even seeing or touching her daughter. Her unfettered faith saved her daughter. But in this story, a group of friends begged Jesus only to place his hands on him.

The first thing that impresses me about this story is the loyalty of these friends. This man was most likely born deaf along not to mention being tongue-tied. He must be living a very lonely life, unable to hear or speak. There was no way for him to communicate, let alone carry on a conversation depriving him of any sense of joy in life. At this moment, each of us should stop and thank God for our ability to hear and speak that enables us to pray and sing God's praises! I am blown away by the compassion of friends who would make such an effort to get him before Jesus.

What strikes me about this man's friends is their faith in Jesus. Remember, Jesus had ministered in this area earlier with great results, but we don't know whether these people met Jesus before this or not; most likely, they have only heard of Him. These people believed Jesus to be, at a minimum, a prophet, and as most prophets would do, they begged Jesus to put His hand on their friend to bless him. They are not explicitly asking for Jesus to heal him as the woman did for her daughter. They want Jesus to take notice of their friend's condition and put forth His power to do what He will. What fantastic trust they have in Jesus to do the right thing for their friend, and they are willing to accept whatever He offers. Are we that ready to take what Jesus wants for us?

Recently, Jesus performed many of his miracles out in the open for all to see and scrutinize. But in this case, he chooses secrecy to avoid

over-exciting the crowd and keep this man from being a public attraction. Because the man couldn't hear Jesus, He used sign language and symbolic acts suited explicitly for this man's needs causing him to exercise his faith. After spitting on the ground, Jesus touched his ears and tongue and looked to heaven, conveying to the man what He was about to do. As Jesus spoke the words "Be Opened!" which literally meant "be opened entirely," the man's ears were opened, and his tongue freed! With a deep sigh, Jesus displayed strong emotion in His battle against the satanic powers that enslaved this man. It is with this same kind of sigh that Jesus reveals to us his compassionate response to the pain and sorrow sin has brought to our world. Let's pray and ask Jesus to open our spiritual ears to hear His voice and untie our spiritual tongues to speak His Gospel for all our friends to hear.

- Compare and contrast the differences in the two stories Mark has shared.
- What impresses you about this man's friends?
- Do you think this man knew what his friends were doing for him?
- What were the friends specifically asking Jesus to do for their friend?
- Do you think Jesus answered their request or did he go beyond their expectations?
- How has Jesus answered a request in your life beyond what you expected?

Further Reading: Isaiah 35:1-8

Friday, May 6, 2022

Read: Mark 7:31-37

Scripture Verse: *"People were really amazed. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes deaf people able to hear. And he makes those who can't speak able to talk." Mark 7:37*

Today's Thought:

When I say this, I know I am preaching to the choir, but Jesus is amazing! We know it, and now the people there in the Decapolis realize it! We know from earlier narratives what happens when Jesus asks someone He has healed not to tell. It is always the opposite! As Jesus was preparing to leave the region after overwhelming them with the miraculous healing of their friend, He commanded them not to tell anyone what they had just seen. He wanted to come in quietly and minister to the people in the region without all the attention typically garnered by a miracle worker.

In today's text, Mark describes the people who had just witnessed the man's healing; and they were amazed. They couldn't help themselves bragging about everything Jesus had done. They shouted, "He even makes the deaf able to hear and those who can't talk to speak." Word traveled fast throughout that region. As the news spread about Jesus, a large crowd gathered with people bringing Him all who were ill or disabled. Although Jesus had come there to enjoy some time off and to rest, He took the time to heal everyone who came to Him. And because of His work in the region, the Gentiles glorified the God of Israel!

In this narrative, Mark again announces to the reader proof that Christ is the Messiah foretold of in Isaiah 35:5,6, "Then the eyes of those who are blind will be opened. The ears of those who can't hear will be unplugged. Those who can't walk will leap like a deer. And those who can't speak will shout with joy. Water will pour out in dry places. Streams will flow in the desert." It also pictures for us how the Gospel of Christ opens the minds of men. It is by His Spirit that what impedes our minds is removed. And by the power of His Word, our physical impediments are healed.

With the words, "Be opened," Jesus opens our hearts which opens our ears to hear and receive the Word of God, resulting in open mouths filled with praise and prayer! When we experience God's grace as this man did, we can't keep the Good News of Christ secret!

- What makes Jesus so amazing to these people of the Ten Cities?
- What makes Jesus amazing to you?
- If Jesus knows people are going to go and tell others what He has done, why do you think He tells them not to?
- What do we learn about Jesus even when He is supposed to be on vacation?
- What does Jesus do for the people?
- What happens when we allow the Spirit of God to open our ears?

Further Reading: Mark 1:22, 44-45; 3:8

NOTES



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