

The Canaanite Woman

Sermon Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2021-06-20

Well, the story we just read is a story that has troubled many people because on the surface it sure seems like Jesus is being needlessly rude and insensitive. Here is a woman who had a great need, yet Jesus ignored her and even insulted her. What's going on?

I will explain exactly what's going on. But before I do that I want to point out that this woman illustrates the position we are all in - utterly unworthy of the least of God's mercies, yet receiving them anyway simply because we have approached Him in faith. If there is an Old Testament parallel to this story on Sovereign Grace, it would be the woman from the same region that we looked at three weeks ago - the widow of Zarephath with the replenishing jar of oil. Both were Phoenicians. Both were outside of the covenant. Neither one had a claim upon God's grace. But God gave it anyway. And to fully understand the story we need to start at the beginning.

The remarkable trip of Jesus (vv. 21,29) - He traveled there for this very purpose!

And the beginning tells us about a remarkable journey that Jesus made. Verse 21 says, "Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon." He had been in Gennesaret, which is on the NW coast of the Sea of Galilee. And if you look at a map and follow the ancient roads, the quickest way to get to the region between Tyre and Sidon amounts to 52 miles. That's like walking from Papillion, Nebraska to Lincoln, Nebraska. That's a long walk.

Now, here's the interesting thing. The only ministry that he did when he got to that Gentile region was to minister to this Gentile woman and then come back. We know that because verse 29 says, "Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee...", etc. The parallel in Mark is the same. He went up there and then came straight back.

To me this shows that Jesus deliberately made this trip for one purpose - to interact with this woman. Of course, there were many lessons that He was going to teach His disciples through that interaction, but that was his sole mission. We know from other passages that He always traveled to areas with a mission in mind. Well, if she was already His mission (his only mission) this puts an entirely different spin on the entire story. The woman didn't change Jesus' mind. He was not a reluctant Savior. He went to great lengths to save her. I challenge you to make that walk from Papillion to Lincoln and then back again. It's a long walk. His whole trip was devoted to letting her find Him. So rather than this story showing us a reluctant Savior, it shows us a Savior who was testing her faith and drawing it out within an Old Covenant context of how to treat Canaanites.

The remarkable identity of this woman (v. 22a) - She was a descendant of the hated Canaanites!

And that is the second remarkable thing that we find in this text. Verse 22 says that she is a Canaanite. It starts, “And behold, a woman of Canaan [literally it is a Canaanite woman] came from that region...” Mark identifies her as a Gentile (which is what the word “Greek” is a synonym of for Mark) and he also calls her a Syro-Phoenician. This means that as to language, she spoke Syrian and as to ancestry she was a Phoenician. Who were the Phoenicians in that region? They were the Philistines - also known as one of the tribes of the Canaanites. So there is no contradiction between Matthew and Mark. And commentaries point out that the use of the word “Canaanite” here is highlighting the fact that this woman was a member of the class of people God had doomed to destruction and upon whom His people were commanded to show absolutely no mercy.¹ All Canaanites were put under the ban. And keep in mind that all of this is still taking place under the Old Covenant and Jesus upheld all the laws of the Old Covenant in order to be our Savior. And what did the law command? War.

Well, this is another fact that gives a totally different spin to the story. It explains Christ’s strange behavior. Her entire ancestry had an anti-Christ heritage. This means that rather than diminishing God’s grace, this story superbly heightens God’s grace toward even those who are under God’s curse. And it’s not without precedence in the Old Testament. We saw that the widow of Zarephath was also from this region. A number of David’s body guards were Philistine converts. But the only way such people could be saved was by renouncing their old identity as Canaanites entirely and becoming full-fledged Israelites. There was a place in the temple for God-fearing Gentiles, but not for Canaanites; they were treated differently. So as we go through this story, keep in mind that she was a descendant of the cursed Canaanites. For Jesus to pronounce mercy on her without her evidencing a willingness to ditch her identity would have been unlawful. Since He was still in the Old Covenant, He would have been in sin to show her mercy without her embracing Him in faith. He couldn’t just assume faith; faith had to be demonstrated. It would have been just as

¹ Blomberg says, “‘Canaanite’ was the general term for the pagan inhabitants of the promised land Israel was told to conquer in Joshua’s day.” Craig Blomberg, Matthew, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 243. France says, “the term ‘Canaanite’ ... [is] a part of traditional biblical vocabulary for the most persistent and insidious of Israel’s enemies in the OT period, those whom God had driven out before his people Israel, and whose idolatrous religion was a constant threat to the religious purity of the people of Yahweh. That a ‘Canaanite,’ of all people, should receive the compassionate ministry of Israel’s Messiah would be a potent symbol to Jewish readers of the universality of the gospel...” R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 592.

unlawful as it was for Mordecai to show respect to Haman the Agagite. Mordecai was not allowed to show Haman any respect because he too was from one of the Canaanite tribes.

The remarkable hiding of Jesus (Mark 7:24-25) - Jesus did not make it easy for her to find Him!

Mark adds a little note regarding Christ's location that is also remarkable. It says,

He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him...

Remarkably, Jesus told His disciples to hide him and to not let anyone know where He was staying. It's almost as if He is trying to make it hard for this woman to find him. In the process, He draws out the remarkable nature of her faith to anyone who might have had doubts. Despite taking every precaution to be hidden, Mark says, "but He could not be hidden, for a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him."

Now, Jesus had not told the disciples the purpose of His hiding. They no doubt thought that they had rented this Airbnb in order to get some needed vacation rest. If that was their intention, they were in for a disappointment. This woman somehow discovers where he is, and comes to the house crying out for help. And Mark 7:26 adds that she kept asking. It's an ongoing cry for help.

The remarkable title that she gives to Jesus (v. 22b) - She knows she is on the outside needing mercy!

And the title that she uses for Jesus in verse 22 of Matthew 15 is also remarkable. There is a long string of remarkable things in this story. You could understand a Jew claiming the title, "Son of David," since the prophesied Son of David was *their* Messianic King. But for a Canaanite to do so would be almost self-defeating. Did not the Old Testament anticipate that this Messianic King would declare war on all remaining Canaanites and vanquish them? And those prophecies were fulfilled on a T when the last remaining vestiges were wiped out in the AD 70 war against Jerusalem. We looked at the fulfillment in the Revelation series. Well, she is one of those hated enemies - a Canaanite. So if you do not understand where she is going with this, it may seem self-defeating. Why appeal to the Son of David who is the sworn enemy of God's enemies? And the answer is that she is willing to submit to Him rather than to buck Him. At every point she comes into agreement with Jesus. Yes, I am a dog. Yes, I deserve your judgment. Yes, the children deserve food and I in no way want to rob the children of the kingdom. Like the Gibeonites of old, she is willing to become a slave and less than a slave so as to receive a bit of God's mercy. There is not a point at which she disagrees with Jesus. Listen to her remarkable speech in verse 22:

And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

She is a Canaanite, and Canaanites had no claims to God's covenant promises at all. And she seems to recognize this. She doesn't claim a promise. She asks for mercy. Mercy is the withholding of a deserved curse. You don't ask for mercy if you don't think you deserve what you are getting. She knows that she deserves judgment. Canaanites were under the curse - perhaps another reason for the demon possession.

And by way of application I would say that this is a much better attitude than many people have when they come to God. Many people think God owes them salvation. Not so. It's a miracle that anyone could be saved or that God would listen to anyone. It's a miracle of grace. And every one of us is symbolized by the Canaanites who were doomed to destruction. Rather than thinking that God is being unfair with us, we should agree that we deserve God's judgment, and that is why we are only asking for mercy; not fairness but mercy.

But she also knows how helpless she is before Satan and his demons. Being outside the covenant she and her family were under the sway of Satan. She felt helpless in the face of this demonic power, but had somehow heard that Jesus could cast out demons. It's worth mentioning that all who are outside of the covenant today are also much more vulnerable to demonic attack. We need all the covering that God gives to us and we need all of His weapons, and one of those protective weapons is church membership. I know that many mock at this. To many, church membership makes no sense - especially when the church itself is so messed up. But by faith we can realize that it is one of the defenses that provides a covenantal canopy of protection. There is a covenantal protection toward even the non-elect who are within the covenant. Those cast out of the church are said to be handed over to Satan. At that point Satan has total access to that person any time he wants - whether that person is elect or not. So it is not simply attending church; it is church membership that gives this covenantal protection. And Jesus will make an allusion to that in verse 24 where putting lost sheep back into the house of Israel has been the goal of His ministry. Lost sheep are vulnerable to wolves - to demons.

In any case, it appears that this woman had done some research. She must have heard about the healings and deliverances that Jesus had done in Israel. In the process of her research she came to three correct conclusions about Jesus.

First, she knows that Jesus is Lord. For a Canaanite to admit that is remarkable. She is not declaring Him to be the enemy. He is Lord. She acknowledges His Lordship.

Second, she came to the conclusion that He was the Son of David. That is a synonym for Him being the Messiah of the Jews. That too is remarkable since many Jews didn't recognize that Jesus was their Messiah. For a Philistine to acknowledge this is remarkable. And she is in total agreement with His being the Son of David. He is the one prophesied to make war against all His enemies, and she says Amen to that.

And third, she recognized that He had authority over demons. All three of those things were foundational information for faith. Faith is founded on fact - the facts of the Scriptures.

But Jesus still has to draw out her faith a bit more. Faith needs to be exercised. In this case, faith needs to overcome obstacles. Before she can have the children's bread, she has to have more than a profession of faith; she has to have a clear demonstration of faith.

The remarkable silence of Jesus (v. 23) - He treats her as not worthy of response!

So he ignores her. Ignoring her had two functions. It was designed to draw out her faith - and we will spend more time on that. But as has already been mentioned, it would also have been unlawful for Jesus to bless one whom God had cursed unless that person had put their faith in Him. When we sing those imprecatory Psalms against God's enemies, God can answer them by putting the curse upon Jesus as our substitute. And that's exactly what happens when people are saved. But this is not just any Gentile unbeliever. This was a Canaanite - a special class of Gentiles that Israel was to never be at peace with.

There is an interesting verse in Joshua 11:20 that explains why the Canaanites could have no mercy. It was not simply because they were Canaanites. It was because their hearts were hardened. The implication seems to be that if any of them had repented, then they could have received mercy. Joshua 11:20 says,

For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Their hearts were hardened... that they might receive no mercy. The Gibeonites were the one exception. Their hearts were not hardened, but they had to overcome obstacles to enter the covenant. The same was true of the Philistines who were saved under David's ministry and who ended up being his body guards - the Cherethites and the Pelethites.

Well, this background information means that the silence of Jesus is not surprising at all. Within an Old Covenant context it is consistent with the ways faithful Jews were to treat Canaanites - even if they asked for mercy. He should have shown no more respect for her than Mordecai did for Haman. Mercy cannot be given without a changed heart that embraces Christ in faith. Verse 23 says,

But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

They are irritated with her and are wondering why Jesus doesn't heal her just to get rid of her. Taking their cue from Jesus, they must have opened the door to the house to tell her to get lost. But Mark tells us that she just kept crying out the same thing. She would not leave. And commentaries point out that the implication of their words is a positive sending away; in other words, heal her and send her away.

The remarkable Israel-centric response of Jesus (v. 24) - Only one body!

But Jesus responds to His disciples (and commentaries are clear that it is a response to the disciples). And this response is the next remarkable thing about this story. Commentators say that the connection between verses 23 and 24 shows that the disciples want Him to just go ahead and heal her so that she can be sent away. And Jesus indicates that there is a condition that needs to be met. Verse 24:

But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Since this was Christ's response to the disciples, and since it starts with an adversative word, "But," it can only mean one of two things. Either He is refusing to heal her because she is not one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel (which the context contradicts) or He is challenging them to accept her as a true Israelite if He heals her and to not be dismissive. I take it as the second option. Israel is being used as a synonym for the elect; for the church invisible. All the elect are lost before they have faith, and Christ has only been sent to the lost elect who constitute the true Israel. Here's how John Lange and Philip Schaff word it. They say,

In our view, the faith of the woman was tried in order to show that she really was a spiritual daughter of Abraham; in which case she would in truth be reckoned one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel... the faith of the woman was now to be tried and proved. Such a test would show to the disciples that she really was a spiritual daughter of Israel.²

Well, if this is true (and I am convinced that it is), then this is an incredibly remarkable statement. It reveals several points of doctrine. First, it points out that Christ's redemptive work is only for the elect. Second, it shows that if you are elect, you are one of the lost (or found) sheep of the house of Israel. Third, it shows that the church invisible (the true church) is the same as the invisible Israel (the true Israel). And let me explain what I mean by that. In Romans 9:6 Paul said, "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel." Just like the New Covenant has a church visible (composed of all church members) and a church invisible (composed of only the elect), the Old Covenant had an Israel visible (composed of those who were outwardly in the synagogues) and an Israel invisible (composed of only the elect). And fourth, this means that just as Gentiles became Jews in the book of Esther, this Gentile would become a Jew and a part of Israel after her conversion. Israel was not primarily an ethnic issue. Yes, there was convent succession from parents, to children, to grandchildren (that part would be ethnic), but there were always new strangers to the covenant being grafted in. So this is a powerful prooftext against Dispensationalism.

But let me focus on His work with lost sheep. The way Jesus words this shows that salvation only comes to the elect and that God's sovereign grace is a distinguishing grace. If she is an elect, then she will be part of Israel and be saved; if not she won't be. And since

² John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 281.

Jesus only does the Father's will, He can only save the elect. Father and Son are united in their purposes for salvation. Well, there goes the Amyraldian theory of atonement down in flames. Amyraut only believed in four of the five points of Calvinism. And in order to defend that strange belief, Amyraut had to teach that the Father's election was particular but Christ's redemption was universal, and so there was a disparity of purpose between Father's will and the Son's will. Very strange. But listen to what Jesus said in John 6,

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:36-40,44)

That's a strong, strong proof for particular redemption (sometimes called limited atonement or effectual atonement). That's very strong. Well, it's hinted at in our text as well.

But there is a fifth deduction that we can make from this verse. It shows that her only hope is to relinquish her identity as a Canaanite under the curse. God's call is for her to become a daughter of Sarah or a member of the house of Israel. As long as she stays a Canaanite, she stays under the curse. And the application is the same when people get saved today. Just as there is no such thing as a Canaanite Israelite, there is no such thing as a gay Christian or a murdering Christian, etc.

And sixth, the fact that Jesus healed her is proof positive that she is one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus is quite clear, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Some commentators make her out to be an exception to a rule because they take His statement in an ethnic sense. No, she was not an exception. Jesus' words leave no room for an exception. So logically, His healing of her proves that she is considered by Him to be one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel - and after this won't be lost. In other words, she won't be treated as a dog; she will be treated as a child and will receive the children's bread.

The remarkable approach of the woman (v. 25) - She treats Him as her Lord!

Which leads us to this woman's remarkable approach. Mark makes clear that Jesus was in the house. The disciples no doubt opened the door to get rid of her, but she must have come in and worshiped him (which is the way I take it) or else He must have come to the door where she worshiped Him. But verse 25 says, "Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!'"

This shows more than a mere historical faith. She worshiped Him. This is not a Philistine who fought Him; this is a woman who worshiped Him. She called Him Lord. Very few of the Jews were even willing to do that, but God had given her faith to do so. "No matter what you say to me or don't say to me, I will worship you." She presses in to Jesus and clings to Jesus.

The remarkable insult of Jesus (v. 26) - He gives hope while still making distinctions!

But this faith needs to be tested for its genuineness. Jesus presses her even more in what amounts to a remarkable insult. Verse 26.

But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

Mark adds a phrase that gives more hope. Mark 7:27 says,

But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

That word "first" is not as exclusionary. Yes, she was outside the covenant, and His reference to children are those inside the covenant, but the word "first" gives some hope. She seizes on both the first and the fact that Jesus didn't call her a dog, but a little dog. In Israelite homes, dogs were kept outside, but children would often invite the cute little puppies into the home and feed them. But by this statement Jesus is making it clear that up to this point this woman is outside the covenant and outside of Israel and outside the covenants of promise. She may be a lost sheep, but she is not yet in the fold, so she can't be treated as a sheep.

And this too constitutes theology that modern professing believers are not clear on. If you are outside of the covenant, Matthew 18 acknowledges that you might still be elect, but you are not to be treated as a child of the kingdom. That's why we don't allow professing believers who have either lost their membership in another church or have not yet become members to partake of the Lord's Supper. Only those who reenter the covenant are so entitled. And rather than bristling at Christ's statement, we should come into agreement with it as this woman did. That shows true humility.

The remarkable faith and humility of the woman (vv. 27-28) - she builds her prayer upon the very words of Jesus!

And that's the *next* remarkable thing found in this passage. She has the humility to agree with everything Jesus says. Verse 27:

And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

She is willing to be considered a little dog who is invited into the home by the children to eat crumbs that fall from the children's mouths. This would have been a rebuke to the disciples who just wanted to chase her out of the house. But Jesus is giving hope to this woman by saying that the children need to be fed first. And I want to show some of the remarkable facets of her faith from that statement.

A faith whose mouth could not be closed

First, it was a faith whose mouth could not be closed. It could not be closed despite the protests of the disciples. It could not be closed despite the silence of Jesus. It could not be closed despite the insults of Jesus. It could not be closed despite the hard doctrine of election. She came into agreement with all and yet continued to ask for mercy.

And I think we can learn from her in this. Does our faith stop petitioning heaven when the heavens are silent? Or do we continue to cry out? Does our faith give up when we receive negative feedback from other Christians, or do we continue to petition Jesus? Does our faith give up when the Bible describes the ugly state of our sinful hearts - worse actually than little dogs. It says that our hearts are unworthy, corrupt, defiled by sin, full of leprosy, and puss, and putrefaction. Those are some of the images that the Scripture gives. False Christians cannot believe that we are as sinful as the Bible makes us out to be. They can't believe that we apart from grace are little dogs. It's too insulting. So they give themselves a pass. But men and women of faith come into full agreement with God's Word that we are indeed dogs apart from grace. But those who have true faith come into the house anyway and fall at His feet and worship Jesus and say, "We deserve everything that you meet out, but by faith we appeal to mercy. Have mercy." True faith will never allow its mouth to be closed. Even when Jesus says, "You deserve to go to hell," we agree and then say, "But I plead for mercy," and continue to cling to Him.

A faith that did not dispute with the Lord

Second, her faith did not dispute with the Lord. Now, I have already commented on this, but I think it bears repeating and making some application. There is not one single disagreement that this woman has with Jesus. True faith cannot sift through the Bible and receive passages we like and reject passages we do not like. True faith submits to the entirety of God's Word and affirms that it is true. What's the first word in her response in verse 27? It's "Yes." The dictionary defines that Greek word **ναί** as "yes, certainly, indeed, it's true that." She was in total agreement with the harsh and difficult descriptions that Jesus had given of her. Yes, Lord, I am a dog. Yes, Lord, You have the perfect right to give or withhold grace as you please. Yes, Lord, I don't deserve what children deserve. Yes, Lord, I don't want you to give anything away that belongs to the children. Despite all of this I call you my Lord. All I am asking are the crumbs that fall from the children's plates. What you feed your children is of such infinite value that even a crumb that falls from their plates is of infinite value to me. That's what she was in effect saying. I value even the crumbs. I am OK with you giving me even crumbs. Crumbs of grace are still grace and your grace will meet my every need. What a marvelous response.

And I think this response is a rebuke to many Christians. I have seen professing believers tell me that they don't believe certain difficult portions of God's Word. Some dismiss the entire Old Testament. Some dismiss only portions of it. One lady told me that she didn't believe in predestination. I asked her if she realized that the word "predestination" is right there in the Bible and that the apostle Paul used it. She didn't think that was the case. When I showed the word to her in the books of Romans and Ephesians, she said, "Well, I don't believe those verses." Well, that's a false faith. It's calling God a liar. True faith does not

dispute with portions of God's Word. Fuller Theological Seminary used to be good, but several decades ago it started teaching that the Bible had errors. They still claim to believe in inerrancy, but they call it "limited inerrancy." What they mean is that it is only inerrant on salvation issues and issues that we cannot see, measure, or test by science. Well, that's not faith. And I refuse to consider a person to be a Christian if he holds to limited inerrancy. He fails the test that Jesus gave this woman. It's disputing with God's Word. He is not yet a child of the kingdom. True faith does not dispute with the Lord.

A faith that built its case upon the very words of Jesus

Third, the argument of her prayer was built upon the very words that Jesus had uttered. Rather than disputing (or disagreeing) with Jesus, she took the premises of her argument from His own words. She does not even try to lay down additional premises. She simply admits everything Jesus said was true and built her argument upon that. True Lord, I am a little dog - and little dogs are allowed under the table, aren't they? And as such a dog, I have a master, don't I? I acknowledge your sovereign Lordship over me. But masters also feed their dogs, don't they? And the children of master's love to feed crumbs to their dogs. Like the prodigal son, she is willing to be made like one of his servants. And just as Jesus used a diminutive "little dog," in the Greek she uses a diminutive "little crumb." For her, this was of inestimable value, but the Lord has so much grace that it is just a little crumb from his riches for Him to deliver her daughter.

And here is the application that I would make for us. When we pray we should never dispute with God or argue *against* His providences. That was one of the things that displeased the Lord the most about the wilderness generation of Israelites - that they constantly grumbled, complained, and disputed against His providences. Hebrews says that it was an evidence that they lacked faith. The point is that we deserve the worst that God might throw at us. We don't dispute that. We don't grumble against God when we lose a job, or when we lose a job offer. Every house that we lost when we were looking for house, we gave thanks to God for His perfect answer. Now, it is OK to pray. The way you do it is like she did it. You build premise upon premise as to why He should still answer our prayer. Jesus bore my curses as my substitute. You Yourself have said that nothing Jesus did was in vain. Therefore I plead the mercies of the cross. Or, if you are already a Christian, and you need something as a Christian, you can argue that Jesus promised that He would provide everything that I need for my kingdom service. I have need of xyz, and as one committed to extending Your kingdom I ask for x y and z. This is what it means to pray according to the will of God. We aren't trying to guess God's decretive will. We are claiming His will as revealed in the Bible. We are filling our mouths with arguments (not disputations, but arguments) from His own Words. And God cannot help but love His Word that we offer back to Him.

Christ's remarkable answer to prayer (v. 28)

Finally, we have Christ's remarkable answer to prayer in verse 28:

Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Mark adds a bit of detail saying,

And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

First, Jesus commends her great faith. If there are two things that attract you to the heart of Christ it is humility and faith. And I urge you to read all you can and work all you can to develop those two graces in your life. Develop the humility of this woman who came into quick agreement with the convictions of Christ's Words. And develop the faith of this woman that refuses to stumble at insults, pointing out of sin, or impossibilities. Do not allow Satan or anyone else to divert you from humility or faith. Those are the two things that give you access to miracles and to God's good pleasure. Those are two things that knit your heart to Christ's heart.

Second, When we align our hearts with His will as this humble woman of faith did, then God will give us all our desires. Jesus said, "Let it be to you as you desire." Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." God loves to fulfill our desires when (and only when) our heart is captivated by His will and His kingdom. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). God loves to delight a people who delight in Him. So Jesus said to the one who worshiped Him and called Him Lord, "Let it be to you as you desire."

Third, don't give up on your children no matter how far gone they might be. This daughter was severely demon possessed. You couldn't get worse off than she was. And yet, by grace, she was fully restored. While God does not guarantee that every prodigal son or daughter will come back, and while we can be in full agreement with the Lord that our prodigal sons and daughters deserve His judgments, we can do like this woman and build a case from Scripture for why God would be glorified in restoring such a son or daughter. And God loves both the humility and the faith that agrees with His Word and pleads His Word. Such prayers *are* answered. And if you are already in the covenant, you have so much more basis for asking than she did.

Fourth, the fact that Jesus says that she had great faith and the fact that He answered her prayers shows to me that this lost sheep was no longer lost but was included by Jesus into the household of faith - into the true Israel. And from this point on she will be treated as a sheep and not a dog. And I am convinced that she would have begun attending synagogue and becoming a member of the visible church. They had synagogues in every region of that area. So that's probably what happened after this story.

And it shouldn't be thought strange that a Gentile could become part of Israel. It happened all the time. Even the Pharisees made converts. Esther 8 verse 17 says, "then many of the people of the land became Jews." Its no more strange than excommunicated Jews being treated as Gentiles. John the Baptist excommunicated Israel and then family by family rebaptized them into the New Israel on conversion. That's why the Pharisees were so ticked off. John was treating them as Gentiles and requiring membership by baptism. Jesus

and the apostles continued that work, and in Acts 2 the Spirit was poured out upon the New Israel of God, called the church. The church is Israel. So again, this should not be thought strange at all.

Fifth, just as Jesus sought the lost to incorporate them into the household of faith, we too should look for lost sheep and have compassion on them. We should long to be used by the Lord to draw the elect to Christ. And just as Jesus made distinctions in how He evangelized and how He treated pagans - some he hung out with and others he did not, so too, Jude calls us to make distinctions in our evangelism. Jude 22-23 says,

Jude 22 And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

You don't get too close to those type. God still saves some people who are equivalent to Canaanites today. He saves them out of murderous drug gangs. He saves Rahabs out of prostitution. He saves homosexuals out of their demonic lifestyle. And just as this severely demon-possessed girl was made completely whole, 1 Corinthians 6 says of such people, "Such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). Let's never doubt the power of God's grace to reach even proverbial Philistine Canaanites.

Sixth, Christ's words indicate that we ought not to ignore spiritual warfare. The demonic world is real and it is dangerous. It is not something to be fooled around with. We aren't told how this girl got possessed or what the symptoms were. We can gather those kinds of details elsewhere. But Jesus is clear that demons are real and that Christians do have authority over them - if we exercise that heavenly authority.

And finally, this is a call to live by faith. May each of us do so. Amen.