



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Study Guide Full
Mark 7:24-30
November 24, 2019

The last time that we were in our Mark series, we saw the compassion and might of our Lord on display in terms of his economy of miraculous multiplication, evident in the feeding of the 5,000.

In this week's passage, we again see the compassion and might of our Lord, as we consider what it means to come to Jesus with the humble "Yes, Lord" of the Syrophenician woman.

*Lord bless your children who walk in perfection
Who manage to master Your will
Give them their share of sweet milk and wild honey
Provide bread of life till they're filled*

*Feed the children but give me the crumbs from the table
I'll wait for them down on my knees
I'd be ever so grateful for the crumbs from the table
For strength needed to follow Thee*

*Lord I'm not worthy to eat from the platter
For I'm just a beggar in need
Satisfy others but when they're all finished
Dear Jesus have mercy on me*

"The Crumbs of the Table"
by American country singer
Connie Smith

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." 29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.*

Mark 7:24-30

Notes:

If you are using these questions in group discussion, approach them as you would a buffet: take 3-4 items—of different kinds, for a balanced diet—and leave behind the rest!

Commentary Notes:

v. 24a. Mark 6 last locates Jesus in Gennesaret, on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. It was there that Jesus has just, in the preceding verses, confronted the Pharisees, their traditions, and their understanding of the law.

Now Jesus relocates 20 miles northwest to Gentile country to Tyre and Sidon. These two ancient Phoenician cities were located on the coastal plain, between the nearby Mediterranean Sea, and the mountains of Lebanon. Both maritime cities were centers of trade.

Note that both cities were mentioned in Mark 3 in terms of the origins of the crowds following after Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

Discuss: Why does it make sense that these verses about the ancient division between Israel and the Gentiles are placed here in Mark's gospel? In the preceding verses, what was the crux of Jesus' confrontation of the Pharisees? (What did Anthony point out about these verses in this week's sermon?)

v. 24b. Mark once again describes Jesus' desire to "be hidden" or "escape notice," as in the sense of avoiding attention. Here he avoids attention by entering a house.

Keep in mind that he has just taken on the Pharisees, and has recently healed the multitudes in Genesaret, having fed previously, with the disciples, the 5,000 multitude.

v. 25. Hearing of Jesus, the women comes to him in the home. Report of Jesus' power must have spread among the crowds from Tyre and Sidon who sought after Jesus (Mark 3). Perhaps the woman had heard of Jesus' previously healing a demon-possessed man in Gentile territory (Mark 5). And perhaps she had heard of the disciples' authority over unclean spirits.

So it is that she—a woman, a Gentile, one with an unclean daughter—summons the courage to fall at the feet of Jesus, presumably entering the house to do so.

v. 26. Echoes of Jesus reviving Jairus's daughter (Mark 5) are heard in the woman's plea (although Jairus was a synagogue ruler). "Syrophenician" refers to an area of Roman rule in northern Palestine.

Meditate: Jesus' need for rest is more than understandable in light of the literary context of these verses (see commentary note aside). Following the model of our Lord, we must ask:

How am I in need of rest this week?

What kind of rest do I need: physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual? How am I committed to getting the rest that I need?

Sit silently over these questions for a few minutes, and then share if comfortable.

Study: What do you remember of the last time Jesus healed a demon-possessed person in Gentile territory? Do you remember the main idea from Pastor Bob's sermon on the passage? If not, consider briefly rereading that text that opens Mark 5.

Meditate: What are your needs motivating you to fall at the feet of Jesus? How are you in need of the mercy of Christ in your life this week?

Confess: In what ways do you feel—like a Gentile mother with an unclean daughter might have felt—"unqualified" to come to Jesus? Is there anything in your life prohibiting you from falling at Jesus' feet? Confess, sharing if comfortable, knowing that we are always qualified to come to Jesus by his great mercy.

Pray: Pray for the courage to fall at the feet of Jesus, pleading for him to reveal and meet the deepest needs of your life/character/person.

v. 27. Jesus response has been dealt with by commentators and preachers in a variety of ways: Jesus was testing her faith (13th-century Aquinas argues that Jesus delays so as to show the woman's firmness of faith); Jesus' humanity, out of his exhaustion, comes through here; Jesus was using only the diminutive form of "dogs" as in "puppies". Ultimately, it's difficult to know the tone of the conversation, especially in light of the passage's many diminutives (readily apparent in a Greek reading), which seem to convey a more friendly scene than often understood.

v. 28. One possible reason that Mark uses the diminutive of "doggie" (κυνάριον, *kynarion*) here, and in v. 27, is that it could be used to distinguish a "house-dog," from a "dog of the street" (κυνάριον, *kyon*). In this sense, and with the addition of the image of a "table", the woman construes a rather homely picture of children and house pets. Thus, the woman seems to anticipate the blessings for the Gentiles through Israel: "Yes, Lord; even we can eat right now!"

vv. 29-30. The woman's insight, anticipation, and humility—particularly in the form of "Yes, Lord"—fully unleashes the healing and compassion of Christ. With what joy she must have made the trip back home to embrace her daughter!

Discern: Regardless of how exactly we interpret Jesus' response (see commentary note aside), Jesus makes clear that if Israel, as "children", is to be fed *first*, surely the "doggies", Gentiles, will *indeed* also be feed. In this sense, and in light of the fact that Jesus has crossed traditional Jewish boundaries of impurity and exclusivity by engaging the Gentile woman in Gentile land, we see Jesus that crosses boundaries here in revealing the kingdom of God. Consider: What are some of the boundaries, literal or metaphorical, that exist in your neighbourhood? How is the Spirit propelling *you* to cross boundaries in revealing the kingdom of God?

Reflect: Many interpreters see the Syrophoenician mother demonstrating great humility and insight: she recognizes that through Israel the Gentiles will receive the blessings of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. Yet, note that in the following chapter, Jesus will give much more than crumbs to a largely Gentile audience in the feeding of the 4,000. In this sense, reflect on your past: When have you been satisfied with only crumbs, rather than full loaves, in the provision of Jesus? How can you grow by the Spirit in daring to ask Jesus for "full loaves"?

Pray: Pray that you would have the humble boldness of the woman in your prayers—the confidence to wrestle with God.

Reflect: "Yes, Lord." What does submitting to Jesus as Lord mean for you in this life season?