

The strong faith of one woman!

Today we're going to hear about a woman who was actually told by Jesus that something was not for her. We're going to see how she responded to Jesus and how Jesus eventually responded to her.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Matthew and we've learned that Jesus is doing a lot of things that are out of the ordinary. He's offending and surprising people, many times even his own disciples.

In today's passage we learn that he and his disciples left the region of Galilee and went up to the region of Tyre and Sidon. It was slightly northwest of the Sea of Galilee and the city of Capernaum where most of Jesus' ministry takes place.

It's important to understand the significance of this location because this is the region that was home to the ancient enemies of Israel, the Canaanites. The Canaanites were the ones that Israel had battled thousands of years ago, going all the way back to Joshua and the Israelites' entrance into the Promised Land. Understanding this is crucial to understanding this passage.

As we understand this passage, we will seek to grasp four behaviors or actions: two from this Canaanite woman and two from Jesus.

First, this Canaanite woman recognized who Jesus was.

This woman is of Canaanite decent and she is from the region of Tyre and Sidon. This place was mostly a Gentile, or non-Jewish, region.

Jesus was Jewish and those who believed Jesus to be the Messiah believed him to be the Messiah for the Jewish people. Not everyone believed that Jesus was the Anointed One, but for those who did, they believed that he was the Anointed One for the Jewish people only.

This woman had no business hanging out with Jewish people. She was a Canaanite. The Canaanites and the Israelites didn't want anything to do with each other. They were ancient enemies.

Yet, this lady cries out and keeps crying out after Jesus, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!"

She not only recognized that Jesus could help her, but she cried out after him using this very Jewish name to describe the Messiah, the “Son of David.”

She recognized that Jesus is special, she recognized that he can help her daughter, and she recognized that he was the promised ancestor of King David of Israel.

Let me ask you something, do you and I recognize Jesus the Messiah? Do we know who he is? Have we learned of him in the Scriptures? Have you seen His fulfillment of prophecy? Do you know Jesus?

This Canaanite woman recognized Jesus.

This is a very strange yet powerful moment in the progression of this story.

You see, even at the time of Jesus, the term “Canaanite” was not used much to refer to people from that region. Many people would have described this woman as a “Phoenician.” However, Matthew wanted his Jewish readers to understand the significance of this interaction between this woman and Jesus.

This woman continued to cry out after Jesus to the point that the disciples felt like something needed to be done.

They asked Jesus to send her away. We’re not sure if they wanted him to grant her request and then send her away, or simply to send her away, but nevertheless, they ask him to send her away.

Jesus’ reply would have been very understandable for the Jewish people who were present, yet, it’s also perplexing for those of us who have seen the compassion of Jesus in other places.

You see, it seems that Jesus may have been up to something here. It seems like perhaps he was teaching the disciples, the woman, and all of us that his power is much greater than we can imagine, and his redemptive reach is far greater than we can conceive.

Jesus says that he cannot help the woman because he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel, meaning, he was sent as the Messiah for the Jewish people.

This was the understanding and expectation for all of the Jewish people regarding their Messiah. Yet, Jesus had already done some work among Gentile people.

So, what's going on? Why is Jesus reluctant to heal this woman's daughter?

This woman would not take no for an answer. She was resilient!

This was her daughter we're talking about! She's not giving up! She wants Jesus to bring healing and rescue for her daughter!

Listen how Jesus responds.

"It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

What? Some of you are thinking, "Did Jesus just call her a dog?" Well, yes, he did. However, there's a context here that's important for us to understand.

You see, Jesus was sent as the Jewish Messiah for the Jewish people. Everyone knew that. Even the woman knew this. Remember, she referred to Jesus as the Son of David, a very Jewish description of the Messiah.

Jesus is not calling her a dog in the sense that he's trying to tear her down, but to make the point that the precious gift he has brought is for the children of Israel not for others. This was the common thought in that day and Jesus is pressing into that thought.

However, everyone is about to learn an important lesson about the measure of God's grace and the effect of Jesus' power.

Look at what the woman says in verse 27.

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

What great faith and determination from this Canaanite woman! She does not give up believing that Jesus can help her! She does not lose hope and trust in Jesus!

She knew she didn't deserve God's grace. She knew she didn't deserve the blessings of the Messiah. She was not even Jewish! But, she also knew

that the power of Jesus was so great that even the leftover crumbs were miraculous enough to set her daughter free from spiritual bondage!

Oh, that we might have faith that God can work miracles in our lives, even though we don't deserve it!

We must believe that we are undeserving and we must believe that Jesus can do anything!

We must be resilient in our pursuit of Jesus and his healing grace!

Jesus did not condemn the woman because she wasn't Jewish, He didn't talk any longer about children and dogs, Jesus said, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."

From that moment on the woman's daughter was healed! Jesus redeemed that little girl back from the power of darkness! She was no longer tormented by those demons!

Notice the connection between the woman's request and Jesus' redemption: it was faith. Because the woman had great faith she experienced the power of Jesus.

In this miracle it is revealed that the miraculous redeeming power of the Son of David is available for all the sons of men. Jesus' redemption is not just for the children of Israel, but for everyone.

Jesus gave us hints and glimpses of the wide-reaching power of his redemption in the Gospels, not just among the Jewish people, but all people.

The redemption of Jesus is widely available for all and it's obtained through faith. Faith in Jesus leads to redemption through Jesus.

Let us be moved by God's Word. Challenge yourself this week in the following ways:

Demonstrate resilient faith this week. The woman was desperate and persistent. Are you desperately and persistently seeking Jesus?

Do you believe in Jesus to the degree that you will pursue Jesus and his ways?

Experience redemption this week. Have you experienced the redemption of Jesus? There may be something from which you need redemption this week. Be redeemed through Jesus!

Look to Jesus! Be redeemed! There is nothing outside the reach and power of the miraculous redemption of Jesus the Messiah!

Put this passage to work in your life this week. Amen