

# PHOENICIAN WOMAN'S DAUGHTER

Date: March 30, 2020

Scripture: Matthew 15:21-28

Good morning! My name is Ryan Britt. This Lent season we are working through some of the miracles Jesus performed during His life that are shared with us across the gospel accounts. We are looking at how each of these miracles points us to the greatest of all miracles, which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The miracle we are focused on today is found in Matthew 15:21-28.

<sup>21</sup> And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." <sup>23</sup> But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." <sup>24</sup> He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." <sup>25</sup> But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." <sup>26</sup> And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup> She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Matthew 15:21-28

Now, it seems that in the order of time that this miracle was performed shortly after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. This point in time would've been a time of hardship and danger for Jesus, the roman ruler, Herod, is suspicious of Him and the Pharisees were growing in hostility toward Him.

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Jesus knowing that His time had not yet come, departs the regions of Israel He had been teaching in in order to continue instructing the 12 disciples.

What Jesus is doing is seeking the seclusion of a friend's home, but what to us on the surface may look like an attempt to hide in fact is not. Jesus departs the regions that He had been performing miracles and teaching and heads for the borderlands of Tyre and Sidon.

We aren't told He actually enters into what would have been known as this pagan territory, but He holds up at the border. It is here, in this hardened land, that a woman from this pagan territory, a woman outside the covenant of Israel, approaches Him.

Jesus's ministry to this point in time had kept Him within the limits of the land of Israel, but here, He goes to the borders of Tyre and Sidon for a single deed of mercy toward one outside of the Holy Land and the Holy people. What we see in this is that there is no where His mercy won't go. There is no where His mercy can't find us. There is no one beyond the merciful touch of Jesus.

British pastor, Campbell Morgan, says of this miracle that it is "One of the sweetest stories of them all – the mother's heart carrying the need of her daughter with unswerving faith to Him who had created the love of the mother".

The mother is referred to as a woman of Canaan, which means that she was a descendant of the original inhabitants of Canaan, she was a gentile of gentiles. She was an outcast, in every way.

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As a Phoenician woman, a woman of Canaan, she would've certainly been taught to worship the goddess, Ashtoreth, who was known as the great mother goddess. This goddess was supposed to give her devotees everything good and her religion gave its followers permission to do pretty much everything evil.

This mother, from a pagan religion and a pagan people, is perhaps the only example we have of a person outside the covenant people of Israel being blessed by God in the flesh, by the Lord Himself, Jesus Christ, during His time on earth.

So this mother, in great distress, approaches Jesus seeking freedom for her demon-possessed daughter. She says her daughter is severely possessed. I don't even know what that means, but it can not be good. The mother, filled with anxiety and uncontrollable worry, which is something every parent can relate to in some way.

There is no pain in this world like kid pain. But somehow, through the hurt of it all, she cries out in front of Jesus and she says, "Have mercy on me, O Lord son of David on me and my daughter." She calls Jesus, "Lord." She shows her respect for His divinity. She recognizes His superiority and authority over all created things.

And then she calls Him, "Son of David", recognizing that in this prophet from Nazareth there is someone who is willing to travel beyond the limits of Galilee to see her. This faith at work within her, it is calling out to the Author and Perfector of faith. These words "Lord, Son of David", these are the pivot, this is the evidence of a God-breathed faith at work within her.

She acknowledges Jesus for who He is and she says, "Have mercy on me and on my daughter".

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You see, her child's pain, her child's misery had become her own. In Jesus, she sees the One who is able to bless both mother and daughter alike. He is the one who has total healing in His hands, the One who can break any chains, set the captives free. As He hears her cry, Jesus responds in a pretty peculiar way. The Scripture says He answered her, "Not a word."

Now, up until this point in Jesus's ministry, all the patients who had come to Him for healing were healed at first word or they were led to cure through some series of statements or questions. Why would He do this? Why would He answer, "Not a word." Could it be that the persistence of faith He knew this mother had, He wanted to put on display for His disciples to see? Could her persistent faith be what He wants us to see?

This mother, seemingly un-phased by His lack of immediate response, she creeps closer to Him, she keeps knocking on His door all the way to the point of becoming annoying to the 12 disciples.

The disciples look at Jesus and say, "Send her away." Give her what she wants and send her away. They are saying that she is interfering with our rest, she's bothering us. But Jesus, He doesn't answer His disciples according to their demands nor does He answer the mother according to hers, at least not in the way in which they wished He did.

After the commotion of it all, Jesus speaks and what He says could have easily sealed the hopelessness this mother was feeling, that is if it weren't Jesus speaking. You see, since it is Jesus speaking we have to remember that Jesus always has the long play of obedience in mind.

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When Jesus says to her, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Which, that statement at this point in time is true to what had been the crux of His ministry. He had exclusively focused inside the walls of Israel. This gentile woman, being outside the covenant promise of Israel has absolutely no claim on the Messiah. But even so, Jesus's mission on this earth that started locally in the regions of the Holy Land was being prepared to burst across all border, across all divisions, across all nations and all races. You see, the design of God's gospel is that it be universal for all who would believe. This woman and her daughter are a whisper of that which is to come.

These next words, packed with power. Having heard Jesus's statement about His focus on His countrymen she leans in closer and says, "Lord, Help me."

You see, in order to come to true life, we have to come to the end of life as we know it. In order to come alive to the things of God, we all come to the end of ourselves. "Lord, help me."

He answers her and says this, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." By children He means Israel and dogs were a term that the Jews used to describe the gentiles.

What Jesus is doing is contextualizing the gravity of what's going on at this moment in history. He is not calling the woman a dog, what He's doing is painting a picture of what would've been common place at this point in time of small household dogs whimpering at their masters table in hunger. He was echoing what He knew was, impatiently and wrongly, in His disciples minds.

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This mother, without a flinch, she draws something sweet out of Jesus's mouth while being surrounded by the bitterness in the disciple's hearts.

Her faith strong, her desire to see her daughter healed strong, she comes in closer, almost with more confidence. She says, "Yes, Lord." yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.

Yes, Lord, whatever You have to offer is better than anything I've encountered so far. Yes, Lord, whatever falls from Your grace is better than the false gods I've been taught to worship. Yes, Lord, if You will give it and I believe You will because it is who You are then I will receive it.

Her sense of unworthiness is deep, but her confidence in His abilities is deeper.

When we come to the end ourselves, to the end of the ways of man that seem right in our minds we find ourselves at the feet of Jesus.

With nothing to offer Him, deserving nothing from Him, we come to Him. With His heart set on us we find ourselves, through all the pain of life and the brokenness of sin, we find ourselves standing at the edge of the empty tomb. We, like this mother, like this daughter, we need healing, we need freedom, we find ourselves at the empty tomb needing salvation. It is here in this place where we find not just what we need, we find who we need.

The death and resurrection of Jesus heals us eternally when we place our faith in it. Just as this mother was healed, just as her daughter was healed. We find the full assurance of hope that produces persistent faith through the resurrection of Jesus

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Christ. We stand as believers in full confidence that the word given the apostles and the hope of glory made known to the world through Jesus Christ will forever be sure, it will never end, it can never be defeated and it is into the victory of Jesus Christ we go. We do not look for the living among the dead. We look to the resurrected Christ. He is alive and we are alive with Him.

Let's pray.

God, we pray that You would bless the reading and hearing of Your Word. We pray that in all of the areas of our lives where we need healing that You would touch us and heal us. We know that by Your stripes we are healed. I pray healing over all those who are listening today. Holistic, supernatural life, breathed into them. Father, I pray that they would be comforted by Your words and by Your Spirit and that they would know that You love them, that You have a plan for them and that You sent Jesus to redeem them so they could walk in the fullness of life. We thank You for Your grace and for Your goodness in all things. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.