

**Crumbs and Compassion**  
*Mark 7:24-37; May 16, 2021*

**Introduction:** Some of you know this, but I just went through one of the worst weeks of my life.

- Two Tuesdays ago (April 27), as Leigh and I were getting ready for bed, we got a phone call from my twin sister. We knew something was up because she never calls that late. She said, “You guys need to pray. Kolson (my 16 year old nephew) has been in a bad wreck and it doesn’t look good.” We immediately began praying, me in shock and Leigh overflowing with tears. And then about 15 minutes later, she called back, sobbing with the words, “He didn’t make it.”
- We quickly decided that our entire family needed to be with our family so we departed around midnight that night and began the 18 hour trek to the upstate of SC.
- We spent the next week grieving with our family. You’re not supposed to have to buy a grave plot and pick out a casket and plan a funeral for your 16 year old son.
- Boston had a special place in Kolson’s heart. For as long as I’ve known him, he loved the Celtics. Kolson has been to Boston multiple times. He came up on a mission trip with his parents and siblings back in 2011 right before we launched our first service. Most recently, he was here two years ago and sat in one of these chairs for both our Good Friday Service and Easter Sunday.
- Thank you for the texts, messages, cards, meals, flowers. We have felt loved and cared for.
- Why am I telling you all of this?
  - None of us can escape the certainty of death.
    - *The wages of sin is death...* (Rom. 6:23).
    - *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment* (Heb. 9:27).
  - None of us know how many days we have left to live.
    - *What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes* (James 4:14).
    - *O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!* (Psalm 39:4).
    - *So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom* (Psalm 90:12).
- This is why Jesus matters.
  - Their’s stories of death everyday on [Boston.com](http://Boston.com).
  - There are millions in Greater Boston who are far from God.
  - There are billions in the world who are far from God.

**Read Mark 7:24-37**

**I. The Crumbs of Jesus are Sufficient to Satisfy (24-30).**

**The Setting:**

- Tyre and Sidon:
  - Tyre and Sidon were directly west and north of Galilee.
  - Today, it's modern day Lebanon.
  - This was a Gentile region known to be antagonistic toward Israel.
- Why did he get away?
  - We're not told exactly, though it seems like he might have been looking to get away for some time alone with his disciples for rest and instruction (cf. 9:31-32).
- A Gentile, Syrophenician Woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit/demon.
  - Phoenicia was part of the geographical area and the Roman province of Syria.
  - This incident is formally an exorcism but the dialogue between Jesus and this woman and its implications are far more important than Jesus' healing of this little girl.
  - As one commentator notes, "Of all the people who approach Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, this individual has the most against her from a Jewish perspective. V. 26 reads like a crescendo of demerit: she is a woman, a Greek Gentile, from infamous pagans of Syrian Phoenicia" (James Edwards).
    - This is the first explicit reference to Gentiles in Mark.
  - With Jesus' encounter with this woman, he foreshadows the expanding scope of his ministry in terms of geography, ethnicity, gender and religion.
  - There was nothing in this woman that would've drawn the ear of Jesus except her desperate need (Ills: no one gave her a great introduction - me and Aaron Cavin at the Send Conference).
  - The good news: Jesus doesn't see our status but our need.
    - "God's mercy responds to human need in such a way that it breaks societal patterns of exclusion" (J. Gundry-Volf).
    - My gut tells me that the scribes and Pharisees would've expelled this lady rather than embraced and engaged her.

### **Jesus' Initial Response (27):**

- This is almost like a parable (though it's not called one).
- Clarify terms:
  - Children: the Jewish People
  - Children's Bread: Jesus' message
  - Dogs: Gentiles
    - In most of Scripture, "dogs" carries with it a negative connotation (cf. Matt. 7:6; Luke 16:21; Phil. 3:2). They were associated with uncleanness because they ate garbage, corpses and other unclean things (cf. Exod. 22:31; 1 Kings 21:23; 22:38; 2 Kings 9:36).
    - "Dogs" would've been a fit description for the Gentiles who were ignorant, godless and pagan.
    - Did Jesus think of this woman with the above associations? If not, why did he use a term that carried them?
      - 1. Contrast unclean/clean of the previous passage (7:1-23). It

would be hard to see Jesus opposing the rabbinic view of unclean things while calling Gentiles unclean here.

- 2. The Greek word used here is not the usual word for street dog. Rather, *kynarion* is used which refers to dogs kept in the house as a pet. Using this term would've emptied it of the former associations. We think differently of house pets than we do wild dogs.
- 3. "Dog" signifies a traditional distinction between Jews and Gentiles that is important to the story.
- Paraphrase of Mark 7:27: "Let the Jews have a chance to hear and respond to the gospel first for it wouldn't be right for the gospel to spread to the Gentiles before the Jews, God's chosen people."

### **The Woman's Response (28):**

- Her response is both humble and persistent. In fact, I think she might be the first person in Mark to hear and understand a parable of Jesus.

### **Jesus' Final Response (29-30):**

- She recognizes and rewards her faith (cf. Matt. 15:28: "O woman, great is your faith!").

### **What's the point? What is Jesus trying to teach?**

- "First"
  - "First" establishes a priority of mission: Jesus' mission must first begin with Israel.
  - But "first" also offers the woman hope. "First" implies that others will follow. The Gentiles will also become recipients of God's grace.
  - Additionally, the use of *kynarion* for dogs "implies the dogs are *house* pets; that is, they belong to the household and will be fed along with the children" (James Edwards).
  - This passage establishes the priority of mission without excluding other hungry mouths: first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.
  - While Jesus' mission must begin with Israel it will definitely not be confined to Israel.

*It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.* (Isaiah 49:6, ESV)

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* (Romans 1:16, ESV)

- The book of Acts: mission started in Jerusalem. Peter experienced these truths firsthand in Acts 10 with Cornelius (see specifically 10:13-15, 28, 34-35, 44-45).

- “And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.” (Acts 10:28, ESV)
- “So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34–35, ESV)
- What we see here is a preview and a foreshadow of the later mission of the disciples to the Gentiles and their acceptance of the gospel.
  - Mark 13:10: And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.
  - Mark 14:9: And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.
- “Be satisfied” or “eat all they want”

*“Let the children **be satisfied** first...” (Mark 7:27, NET)*

*“First let the children **eat all they want**...” (Mark 7:27, NIV)*

- We saw this very term in the feeding of five thousand: “And they all ate and were satisfied” (Mark 6:42). We’ll see it again in the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:8).
- The passage is about the sufficiency and surplus of Jesus: there’s plenty to go around. The Gentiles aren’t robbing from the Jews, they are just eating what is theirs from the surplus of what the Jews experienced.
- The crumbs of Jesus are sufficient to satisfy the world.
- This woman trusts the abundance of Jesus and his message to spill over and include people like her.
- This reminds all of us: there is room for every kind of person in the gospel. This is why you’ll hear me say at NEXT today, “We want to be a thumbprint of Medford.” We realize we’re not the only church in Medford and that some people will connect elsewhere, but what we do want to make sure if that if someone is offended that it’s the gospel that offends.

## **II. The Compassionate Touch of Jesus brings Freedom and Joy (31-37).**

### **The Setting: The Region of the Decapolis**

- This is the area where Jesus healed the Gerasene demoniac man that no one could subdue. Do you remember how that passage ended?
  - “And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.” (Mark 5:20, ESV)
- Jesus’ reception could be due to this man’s missionary efforts.
- In contrast to the previous passage, the emphasis here is on Jesus’ healing.
- This is one of only three stories in Mark that finds no counterpart in the other Gospels

although Matthew 15:29-31 does provide a brief summary that parallels this passage.

- A man who was deaf and had a speech impediment.
  - It's not clear if this man just had difficulty taking but could talk some or if he was completely mute.

### **The Healing:**

- Jesus put his fingers into his ears and spit and touched his tongue.
  - Why does he do this? Wet Willy :)
  - It's a symbolic act that was seen as purifying because of the source, Jesus.
  - There's more here. Here is Jesus touching someone again whom the Jews would've called ritually unclean.
    - Jesus identifies with the needy.
    - Jesus' physical touch here is an expression of compassion.
    - I love what James Edwards says, "Love seeks intimacy, and the touch of Jesus is a tangible prelude of the fellowship that believers experience with him through faith."
- Jesus *sighed/groaned* and said in Aramaic, "Be opened" (eff-fatha)
  - Sigh/groan (cf. Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:2, 4).
    - Jesus groans over the physical weaknesses that have arisen on account of the fall.
  - His ears were opened and his tongue was released - he was liberated!!! Freedom!!!
  - Jesus' compassionate touch brings freedom.
- Jesus charged them to tell no one.
  - The purpose was not for them to pretend that the miracle didn't happen but "to prevent the public relations problem of the healings' sensationalism producing overwhelming obstacles for Jesus' public ministry" (Darrell Bock).

### **The Implications:**

- This healing is loaded with eschatological significance:
  - The word *mogilalon* used in Mark 7:32 for "speech impediment" is only used elsewhere in the LXX in Isa. 35:6 where it translates a Hebrew word meaning *mute*.
  - This clearly links this story to the Isaiah quotation.
  - Yet, since Mark is primarily writing to a Gentile audience, he doesn't appeal to the OT very frequently. So, when he does, we should pay attention.
  - Isaiah, like the other prophets, was a message of repentance, judgment and hope.
  - Isaiah 35 is a passage near the end of the first part of Isaiah following chapters declaring God's judgment. In Isaiah 35, though, the message shifts to one of hope and joy not just for Israel but for all of creation.

*"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the*

wilderness, and streams in the desert;” (Isaiah 35:5–6, ESV)

“*And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*” (Isaiah 35:10, ESV)

- Mark’s presentation of Jesus shows that with the coming of Jesus, this day has been inaugurated.
- The touch of Jesus powerfully inaugurates the age to come.
- This healing signals the eschatological arrival of of the kingdom of God and everlasting joy.
- Jesus has come to reverse the effects of the fall. The blind, deaf, lame and mute are all tragic effects of living in a fallen world. Jesus is the great reversal. He is our hope for the reversal of all the impediments afflicting the world today.
- Jesus’ touch powerfully reverses the effects of sin.
- Jesus’ compassionate touch brings freedom and joy to the world.

**The Point: Jesus brings redemption to the broken both near and far.**

**Conclusion:**

How does the crowd respond?

- “He has done everything well.”
- This recalls Gen. 1:31: “And God saw everything that he made and indeed it was very good.”
- Jesus’ work of redemption is like the Father’s work in creation: it is very good with nothing left to be desired. Jesus’ redemption is a New Creation. New creation life, redemption, is found in him.
- Do you know him? Have you stepped into new creation life?

**Pray and then lead into the Lord’s Supper.**