

Sermon Series: Book of Mark
Sermon: *A Man For All Nations*

Scripture: **Mark 7:24-30**

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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Introduction:

Since the beginning of time, people have had a hard time liking people that were not like them.

How we talk, the color of our skin, the way we dress and the things we do are what make us... “Us” ...and makes them, “Not us”.

And every country and culture in the world has labels or names we call people who don't belong in our group.

We don't love people who aren't like us...*easily*. If you think you don't struggle with it (*ethnocentrism*), it's probably because you are always with your own people.

Live closely with those who aren't in your same culture and language for a while and you'll see things in your heart that you don't like.

As we saw last week, the religious leaders in Israel (called the Pharisees and the Scribes) thought that being around non-Jews contaminated them and polluted them. The Jews were the chosen people of

God, God's children, and they were to be his holy representatives, displaying his glory, among the nations. He chose them but they chose idols and turned away from God.

Well, the religious leaders had gotten real serious about being set apart and different from everyone. They'd become *extremists*! They would wash their hands before they ate bread to make sure they weren't contaminated by non-Jews. They'd even take a bath after going to the market because they could've touched a Roman or Samaritan or a person from Tyre or Sidon.

As we saw last week, Jesus, in response to their attitude and traditions, said that the outside doesn't contaminate anyone. What comes out of your heart is what contaminates you.

Today, we come to **Mark 7:24-30**. The story of a Syrophoenician woman's faith. Let's read it together.

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 Syrophoenician 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.

Tyre and Sidon were outside of Israel. It is in modern day Lebanon. Tyre was the home of Baal worship and the home of Queen Jezebel. It was a Greek-ruled pagan place. The last place for a Jewish Rabbi to go.

As far as the Bible says, this is the only time that Jesus went outside the land of Israel. Even though it seems to be a time of retreat with his disciples, with no intent to minister to the nations.....he ends up doing some ministry.

People find out he's there. His fame has spread even to other nations by now.

So, this woman (who is Greek speaking-from Phoenicia- An ethnic Canaanite, who the Jews were supposed to exterminate) approaches him *persistently* to heal her little daughter who is possessed by a demon. Don't read over that too quickly! Can you imagine if your little daughter had an evil spirit living inside of her? Bad enough that this week my daughter

was sick in the hospital. This lady's daughter was possessed. She was desperate.

In fact, let's look at Matthew's account in Matthew 15:21-28. Matthew will help us see her desperation.

21 And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 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." 23 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." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26 And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

She seems to have some prior knowledge of Jesus. She calls him 'Son of David' and 'Lord'. She is persistent. Chasing after Jesus and crying out.

Jesus says to her a very unusual statement. It's a riddle of sorts. An analogy.

“Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Jesus calls her a DOG!

Dogs were the bad word that many Jews used for Gentiles. Dogs in that day were dirty scavengers & wild, roaming around eating garbage and dead animals and sometimes dead bodies. Strangely, Jesus doesn't use THAT word for dog. He twists the word a bit to make it mean “little doggie”. There were 2 types of dogs back then. Little ones that lived inside and ate scraps and the wild ones outside.

What's Jesus saying?

“The children at the table are the Jews.

The bread is the good news of the kingdom.

The dogs are the non-Jews or the nations.....or to be more specific...this woman....And it is not time for the Nations to be fed, YET! **I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** This is the time for the Jews, the children to be fed, not the little dogs. It wouldn't be right to feed the dogs before the children. The dogs get fed after the kids.”

What was her response?

But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.”

There's something in her statement that displays **FAITH**. What does she mean?

What she is saying is this, *“I know I’m not a child. I am just a dog. I don’t belong at the table. I know that.”* {She displays humility.} *“But I’ll be happy to have just a crumb from this table. Just one crumb is enough.”*

In Matthew 15 it says she has *MEGA FAITH*. She believes. She goes from a little dog under the table to pulling up a chair at the Lord’s table.

And Jesus does something that blows me away. The demon leaves her daughter. He didn’t even do anything! Nothing! The little girl isn’t even there.

Why did Jesus go up to Tyre and Sidon?

Though it isn’t time YET for the good news to go to the nations.....though it’s not time YET for the dogs to be fed....Jesus is showing his disciples what **THEIR** mission will be. Oh, later the nations will be fed and aren’t you and I glad they were!

It’s a little **mission orientation for the 12**.

Jesus delivers this Syrophoenician woman’s daughter. Next he will go to a Gentile pagan area and heal a deaf and mute man.

Then he will feed 4000 Gentiles in Mark 8.

The 12 don’t get it till Acts 10 where Peter has a VERY SIMILAR experience as we see here in Mark 7.

Why is this story here? Why did Mark place it here...

Mark is writing to Romans. They were hated by Jews. They need to know that all nations are welcome in God's kingdom; to know that **the chairs are all the same at the Lord's table.**

Perhaps we need to be reminded this morning that all of us *ARE* Gentiles. We don't even deserve to be at the master's table eating the children's bread any more than the woman.

We *ARE* the little dogs. By God's grace he saved us and gave us a seat at the table. We are all sinners saved by grace. So, we should not and cannot look down on anyone else. In Christ there is no Chinese, no American, Roman, Greek, Jew or Japanese.

The chairs are all the same at the Lord's table.

Locally: You have any relationships with people who aren't like you? Are you making any efforts to engage people from another ethnicity? We display God's heart when we do this and the benefit we get is great joy.

Globally: God may want to move you to **Japan** or somewhere else and give your life to see those who aren't like you come to know Jesus. 1% of **Japanese** are Christian. Would you go?

There's no greater joy than to obey God. There's no greater joy than to let go of all our stuff and move somewhere to give our lives to beckon people to a seat at God's table.

You may say this morning, “I’m a sinner and I have no right for God to love me. But I want forgiveness and peace and I want to be a child of God.”

Then like the woman, in faith, cry out to Jesus to deliver you. Turn away from your sinful life. Believe what the Bible says about Jesus...that he died for sinners and that he rose from the dead...give your life to him.

He will give you a seat at his table and you’ll dine with him forever with people from every tribe, nation and tongue.