

PP The Wonder Woman series: *A Praying Mother*
Part 7-Mark 7:24-30 (p. 842 of the Pew Bible)

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We have mothers in our church who have prayed women out of their sons lives, because they
 saw the destructive path they were on
 We have wives who have prayed their husbands into career moves
 We have women in this church who have prayed addicts into freedom from captivity
 There is simply power in a praying woman, whether wife, coworker, friend, or, as we are going
 to see today, a mother
 And my hope from this message, is that our ladies at Cornerstone will rise up as never before,
 and realize the power they have in being a praying Christian

The Wonder Woman we are going to see in our final sermon in this series, requires us to move
 into the New Testament
 Jesus has led His disciples on a rare trip outside of Israel's boundaries, and they are there on
 what I suspect to them was a hard-earned vacation, but in reality, was a mission trip
 And like many mission trips, the goal was both the transformation of the mission team as well as
 the impact of those on the mission field
 While there, they will meet a mother so fierce in her determination to get help for her daughter
 that she moves Jesus to amazement
 I would pause at that statement, and ask all you mothers to consider that as you cry out to the
 Lord on behalf of your children, you can be as equally amazing to our God
 Mothers can pray like no other...deeply, passionately and with great perseverance

PP Mark wrote in **verse 24**, ***“And from there He arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.”***

They had been on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and, and it was a 30-40 mile walk to the
 region of Tyre, then further North to Sidon, along the Mediterranean Sea
 The disciples must be thinking it was a trip to the beach, for why else would Jesus take them
 there other than a ministry break from the relentless opposition of religious leaders

PP Matthew hints at this by saying ***‘they went away from there and withdrew’***, while Mark tells
 us Jesus ***‘did not want anyone to know’*** that He was there

But Jesus has more than a vacation in mind, for He's about to take them on a mission trip, ***“to the region of Tyre and Sidon”*** an area inhabited by Gentiles

When they arrived, ***“immediately a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit heard of Him and came and fell down at His feet.” 7:25***

I would like to ask you about the last time you pleaded, desperately to God in prayer...

Can you recall ever doing that?

Maybe for a loved one who was dying, or a marriage that was failing

A job you desperately wanted, or forgiveness for a terrible sin

Yet there is a level in grief that goes deep indeed in the heart of a mother for her child

“came and fell down at His feet...and she begged Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.”

Mark 7:25-26

If we translate this literally from the Greek, she is repeatedly saying, *“My daughter is badly demonized.”*

Mark's gospel recorded several encounters with demons, and shows us that demonic activity was a widely seen problem of the day

The Jewish people believed that demons sat on thrones and hovered around cradles, able to devour their children

They believed that there were 7,500,000 demons working feverish destruction

In many ancient cemeteries, skulls have been found with holes that were bored in them, thought to allow the demon to escape the person

Experts know that it was done on a living people because bone growth occurred

The extracted disk of bone would then be worn around the neck as an amulet to ward off evil

Another attempt to exorcise a demon was to put a foul-smelling root up the person's nose, thinking that the demon would be driven out

Demons were particularly active when Jesus walked the earth, so it is no surprise that a desperate mother comes to Him for help with her demon-possessed daughter

Wouldn't it be great if the disciples, the young church, responded graciously, tenderly to her?

***"And His disciples came and begged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is crying out after us.'"* Matthew 15:23**

The woman was begging for her daughter's help, and the disciples are begging-same word-for peace, that Jesus would get rid of her, and like her, they are saying it over and over

Sometimes we who have received such mercy give it so little to others

I came across a quote this past week that sadly struck me deeply

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, the 18th century German writer once prayed, **PP** *"Help me to discover Thy truth, O Lord, and preserve me from those who have already found it."*

What an indictment on how harsh Christians can be to those struggling in sin

But it's not difficult to understand why the disciples acted this way, for Mark tells us ***"the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth."*** **Mark 7:26**

She's a **woman**, and already at a disadvantage in the ancient world of Jews and Greeks

She's a **Gentile** and there was a massive racial divide between Jew and Gentile

Pious Jews thought that Gentiles were created by God for fuel to make the fires of hell burn

To them, only Israel was loved by God, all other nations He hated

It was against their law to aid a Gentile mother giving birth to a baby because you'd then be responsible for bringing another Gentile into the world

If a Jew was traveling into Israel from Gentile territory, they would shake the dirt and dust off their feet, not wanting even that in their land

If a Jewish boy or girl married a Gentile, they held a funeral because touching a Gentile in anyway physically like that is tantamount to death

She's a woman, a Gentile and even more, a **Syro-Phoenician** by birth

Meaning she is a Roman citizen, and Rome ruled the Jews and the Jews hated them

Matthew's gospel records this story and adds that she was a **Canaanite**, from a people that Israel had been told by God to wipe off the planet because of their evil

The disciples had, they were taught, a license from God to hate her

Still more, she was from **Tyre**...a stronghold of idolatry and false worship and where the wicked queen of Israel Jezebel had come from

We would be hard-pressed to find a more difficult person for the disciples to love

And now we understand the reason for this mission trip detour that Jesus led them on

Our Wonder Woman was about to teach the disciples a thing or two about faith and mercy
Matthew records this incident in his gospel as well, and he captures these words from her:

PP *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”* **Matthew 15:22**

She didn’t claim she was owed help, or deserved it, for the nature of mercy is that it is given to those who do not deserve it

But shockingly, standoffishly, Jesus **PP** *“did not answer her a word.”* **Matthew 15:23**

His disciples begged that He send her away, and He says to them...

PP *“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’”* **Matthew 15:24-25**

How does our God of compassion-Who would never snuff a flickering candle of faith-respond?

“Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” **Mark 7:27**

I don’t know about you, but at first glance, that sounds incredibly cruel

Ladies, what would have been your reaction, in your suffering, to hearing this from Jesus?

Would you have been filled with anger?

Would all of the desperate hope for your daughter vanish and leave you in despair?

Her daughter has a demon, and it is destroying her life, and no one has been able to help, and it seems Jesus just told her she’s not worth helping

Several years ago, a feminist scholar wrote a scathing article about Christ’s response to this woman, arguing that He was not sinless after all, as His chauvinistic manner wronged her

But let’s look a little deeper here for a moment and see what Jesus was actually saying

Most Jewish people viewed Gentiles as *dogs*, mangy curs who were unclean and defiled

It was a term of contempt used in the same way as our modern word that begins with a ‘B’

But Jesus used a different word here that meant *little puppies*, which were allowed in the house and would be thrown scraps of food as they ate their meals

They didn’t have tableware and instead they used their hands, then wiped them on chunks of bread and threw them to the floor for the dogs as well as bones when meat was eaten

With that understanding, Jesus didn’t use the contemptuous Jewish word for dog, but the word for a little puppy allowed to be in the house and given scraps of food

“Let the children be fed first” in 7:27 means that the door of salvation was open now for Israel, they were called to dinner so to speak, their Messiah was here

The Gentiles will be called to the table in a little while, and in fact would clearly go out in the Apostle Paul’s ministry

PP *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”* **Romans 1:16**

Now, listen to the bold, audacious, mother-saturated faith of this woman

“Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” **Mark 7:28**

She went to the front of the line and urgently asked to get ahead of the Jewish people

Asking for Him to move people aside at the table and set a place for her daughter

Matthew’s gospel records that her courage and faith moved Jesus to say,

PP *“O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”* **Matthew 15:28**

PP From this wonder woman, several lessons emerge that can encourage us all

PP **Your prayers can move God to act for your children*

Mark records our Lord saying something even more necessary for mothers to hear

“For this statement you may go your way, the demon has left your daughter.” 7:29

There is no faith from the daughter on biblical record, it is the mother's, and she moved Jesus to act on behalf of her daughter

This wonder woman mother somehow believed, **PP** ***“whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.” John 6:37***

PP The Puritan, Philip Brooks once said: *'Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness'*

PP *Do not pridefully appeal to God on behalf of human merit, but divine mercy*

She didn't claim her own goodness, or the innocence of her little girl as a reason for His help

She appealed simply to Christ, based on His mercy, God's undeserved favor and blessings!

There are all kinds of tricks in prayer we try with God

Say the right things, get enough people to pray, claim that you are living faithfully, quote to Him the right verse, possess the correct positive thinking, express enough confident faith...

None of these move God to act

Simply humbly cry out for His mercy, with empty hands, and no attempt at persuading him but a broken heart in need of divine help

PP *Put your faith in the right Person*

There is a comical part to this story as Matthew records the disciples saying to Jesus, **PP** ***“Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” Matthew 15:23***

She was not crying out to them for help at all, she was crying out to Jesus alone for mercy

She knew from where her help could come

Moms, go to Jesus, immediately, and persist, not giving up, for often the proof of faith is seen in persistence, and it can amaze God!

Matthew's gospel records that she called Jesus the ***'Lord, Son of David'***, a title for the Messiah, the Savior of the world sent by God

She believed He was the Messiah, which was astounding for a Jew, much more a Gentile

She didn't have some nebulous, positive energy faith like so many claim

Just believing does not accomplish miracles; it is believing on Jesus Christ, the Son of God

She didn't have faith in herself, nor that all things will just work out okay, or in the disciples

Her faith went in one direction only...Jesus Christ, her only true source of help for her daughter

Mothers, pray to Jesus, cut in line for your children, and ask for crumbs of His mercy

Be persistent, don't give up, appeal to His merciful heart, and put your hope in Him alone!

Amen

Pray