

“A Mother’s Faith”

Matthew 15:21-28

INTRO:

Why did Matthew and Mark include this record when Luke did not put it in his Gospel? Matthew’s Gospel, written for the Jewish people who believed they “deserved” all of God’s love and attention, pointed out that Jesus loved Gentiles too. God delights in showing us pictures of Grace. Here is one of those framed portraits for us.

In this passage we learn about the depth of a mother’s love and faith, but also of Christ’s love for us and His grace given freely to us who do not deserve it. We learn of her seeking faith, underserving faith, and thus her great faith herein this paragraph.

I. Seeking Faith (v.21-23)

II. Undeserving Faith (v. 24-27)

III. Great Faith (v. (v. 28)

I. Seeking Faith (v.21-23)

A. Matthew did not tell us directly where Jesus is coming from. That fact is not important to the evangelist. Still, he doesn’t want us to miss that Jesus is no longer in Israel proper.

Matthew 15:21-23 “Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.’ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us.’”

1. The setting is vitally important for framing the picture for us in this account. This unnamed mother did not come with her request in Israel, but in a Gentile area. She did not come because He was well known. She sought Him out in a strange place.

2. She also was a Gentile woman. Matthew called her a Canaanite. She came from the stock of people who had fallen under God’s judgment during the conquest of the Promised Land. This was a Gentile woman. Women in the first century before Christianity changed everything enjoyed no rights at all. Matthew labors all of this to underline that this woman had no right to expect anything from the Lord Jesus at all.

B. Nevertheless, this woman who deserved nothing came to the Lord Jesus Christ to get something. She was a mother with a daughter who is in a desperate situation.

She is possessed of a demon. Mark adds in his Gospel that this daughter was a little girl. Because of her urgent need, this mother seeks out Jesus. This event is so amazing that Matthew introduces it with the exclamation **“Behold.”** Look, can you see her coming to Jesus? The desperate unworthy Gentile mother comes in faith to Jesus.

C. The words she spoke to the Lord are significant.

v.22 “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”

She recognized him as the Lord the Son of David. The title **“Lord”** can simply be a showing of respect, or it can mean that He is God. We do not know what she meant. However, the phrase, **“Son of David”** was clearly Messianic. We can't know that she was fully converted. However, her knowledge is much more than just passing. Her faith was rooted in some of the Old Testament revelation and in a conclusion as to His identity. Because of this she is confident He can deliver her from the situation. Her faith is a faith that impelled her to seek Him.

D. Our Lord's initial response to the woman surprises us. With our modern sensibilities, we expect the Lord Jesus to meet her need immediately. He does not. In fact, He ignores her. His disciples even complain about her and want Him to throw her out.

II. Undeserving Faith (v. 24-27)

A. Our Lord's response did not make the woman quit seeking help from Jesus.

vs.24-27 “But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ But He answered and said, ‘it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’

1. The conversation is vexing to us. Did Jesus actually mean to imply that Gentiles did not count in His ministry? While this may be the appearance on the surface, it clearly is not the point.

2. We must not forget the great commission in **Matthew 28:19.**

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

The point is still she deserves nothing.

B. No one of us can say we deserve something from Jesus. The pride that keeps us from receiving all that God has for us is rooted in the idea that somehow God owes us. When we come to Him for salvation, we do not come having some claim upon

His grace. We must come with the heart of the tax collector, “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” He did not die for us, nor did Jesus save us because we merit it. He saves us by grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace are we saved, through faith and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

C. Having heard this statement that she does not deserve anything from the Lord, she does not argue that point at all. Jesus said, should I give the children’s bread to the little dogs? My ministry right now is focused on the Jews. Should I derail it to minister to those who are not of the covenant people? She does not for a moment argue that point, only to say that as unworthy as she is (one of the little dogs) she wants only a little from Him. Faith again is not based on merit, but need.

III. Great Faith (v. (v. 28)

A. Matthew carefully showed us that the disciples were there for this whole encounter. Just a chapter before (**Matthew 14**) these disciples were in a boat traveling across the Sea of Galilee after Jesus fed the 5,000 and Jesus came walking on the water to them. Peter had gotten out of the boat and walked on the water but then looked away from Jesus and began to sink. Remember what Jesus said to Peter?

Matthew 14:31 *“Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’”*

B. In front of these same disciples, Jesus said to the woman who deserved nothing, **v.28** *“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”*

The Lord Jesus called two people’s faith great in the New Testament. The Centurion’s faith in **Matthew 8:10** and this woman’s faith here. They were both Gentiles who recognized they deserved nothing.

What do we learn from this text?

Great faith is seeking faith. The woman sought out the Lord Jesus in whom she placed her faith. Faith is not faith in a vacuum. Faith is rooted in a person.

Great faith is Persistent faith. The woman would not let go or go away. She knew Jesus was the only one who could help her so she refused to be deterred.

Great faith recognizes it deserves nothing. This woman never tried to plead her merits. She openly admitted and accepted her unworthiness before the Lord and He met her need. This is how we too must come to God to be saved. It is not by merit. We cannot plead any good. It is all of God.

Titus 3:5 *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”*

When we begin to understand that we deserve nothing and He has given us everything, we begin to understand what grace really is.