

Looking back to events a few days prior to this passage we saw that Jesus and the disciples were trying to get away and rest. I think Jesus had some teaching in mind after they came back from their first outreach proclaiming the kingdom. They landed on the shore near the eastern Bethsaida only to be met by a huge crowd. Jesus taught all day followed by the feeding of the 5000. He sent the disciples off that evening into what became a storm. He came to them walking on the water. They landed at Gennesaret and more people met them wanting to be healed. Pharisees came and confronted Jesus claiming the disciples had broken oral tradition by not washing their hands. Jesus lambasted them for putting oral tradition above the Law. In the process He made the claim that seemed so radical to them. It is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out from the heart. Mark commented that in saying this He declared all foods to be clean.

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. Mark 7:24 Now more than ever they needed to get away. With that last saying Jesus had kicked a hornets' nest. They traveled by foot to the northwestern coastal area of Tyre and Sidon, which was a good two-day walk. He has left the Jewish area and traveled into a Gentile region. He was trying to remain anonymous so they could rest from the demanding crowds (3:20ⁱ). They must have found a home that would host them. I would imagine that it was a Jewish home of a wealthy person as it would need to be big enough for the group and be hospitable to Jews. But it seems that someone recognized Him and told others. Perhaps that person had made a journey to Capernaum to be healed (1:28ⁱⁱ). You would never forget the face of the One who healed you.

²⁵ But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Mark 7:25 Before they could settle in, a woman heard of Jesus' presence. Her little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit. We can sympathize with this woman whose young daughter was controlled by a spirit. We do not know how she manifested it, but it must have not only been embarrassing, but more than anything else broke the mother's heart to see her daughter in such torment. She did not hesitate to run to Jesus and fall at His feet to beg for mercy upon her daughter.

²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. Mark 7:26 This Gentile woman probably wore something showing her dedication to pagan gods. But having heard of Jesus' power over sickness and the demonic, she believed this Jewish preacher could heal her daughter. She humbled herself and begged for her daughter to be set free. The tense of the original language means that she kept on begging. She was not going to leave without getting help. Perhaps her daughter was like the poor child we will read about in 9:17,18ⁱⁱⁱ. He would fall to the ground and gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth. We would think it was a seizure except that it threw him into fire or water. Matthew 15:22^{iv} tell us that the woman begged for mercy calling Jesus the Son of David. Somewhere she heard this Messianic title, perhaps from the person who told her about Jesus. Matthew tells us that Jesus was silent and would not respond to her (Matthew 15:23^v).

Jesus had just recently left the doubting, critical Jewish Pharisees. Now He is with a Gentile that has such great faith that she will not stop pleading. His silence did not deter

her. The disciples asked Jesus to send her away. They see her as an annoying dog. Yet she persisted. It is as if Jesus was letting the disciples see what great faith a Gentile could have. He drew out from her a glorious expression of faith that had to stun the disciples.

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." Mark 7:27,28 This sounds so unlike Jesus. Jews sometimes referred to Gentiles as dogs. Jesus was saying that He was to go to the Jews first (Matthew 15:24^{vi}). It would have been an offensive statement to her, but it would also challenge her faith. The question is whether He held the same sense as most of His fellow Jews or if He was testing the lady to draw out her great faith for the disciples to see and for us to read about. We have a number of accounts in the Gospels that show Jesus did not hesitate to minister to Gentiles. There was the Centurion's servant in Capernaum (Matthew 8:10^{vii}), the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:36,37^{viii}), the feeding of the 4000 which would have had many Gentiles present (8:2^{ix}). He spent time with the Samaritans after ministering to the Samaritan woman (John 4:42,43^x). He knew that God was not racially partial (Acts 10:34^{xi}). They are all lost souls to Him. God so loved the entire world that He sent Jesus (John 3:16^{xii}).

Jesus gave her a hard saying. *"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs!"* Ouch! But even that would not deter her. In fact, it prompted a saying of great humility and faith. *"Yes, Lord: but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."* **What a contrast with those proud, self-righteous Pharisees.** She believed that the healing of her daughter was a little crumb from Jesus' great power. That is faith, glowing, humble, glorious faith. She humbled herself, took the saying, and turned it into the praise of Jesus' great power. What a testimony to the disciples of the faith that Gentiles can have! "Just let me have a crumb of what you give to your fellow Jews."

My family had a wonderful yellow lab. Labradors are completely fixated on food. But they can also be very obedient. At the dining table if anyone happened to drop a bit of food on the floor we gave the command, "Hoover, on!" Immediately that dog would search under everyone until he found the little morsal of dropped food. Then he would sit and wait patiently for the command to come again. This Gentile woman was waiting for a crumb to fall from Jesus' lips, a word of deliverance for her daughter.

Jesus may have been leading her to this expression by the word He used for dogs. **He did not use the word for scavenger dogs, but rather for household pets,** like my dog. It was common for these family dogs to wait for the crumbs after people ate a meal together. Wealthy people ate at a table, but common people would sit on a reed mat and gather around the pot in which the food was cooked and all eat out of it. Anything that fell on the mat was the dog's. Her saying was an expression of great faith and humility, but it was not out of the blue. *Luther said, "She catches Christ with His own words." She did so because he wanted her to trap him. What a bright persistence of faith!"*^{xiii}

29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." Mark 7:29 Jesus heard her humble faith. So did the disciples. Maybe this was a lesson for them. He uttered the word and it was done. The demon was gone. Her daughter was delivered. Where was her home? Jesus did not have to know, He just needed to speak, like when He spoke creation into existence (Genesis 1:3^{xiv}; John 1:3^{xv}). He hears the persistent humble prayer of faith. That is what moves Him to action. James

said that when we doubt we should not think we will receive anything from the Lord (James 1:6-8^{xvi}). This woman did not doubt.

Jesus also told the parable of the man who had a guest come to his home. It was late, and he did not have anything to feed the guest. So, he went to his neighbor. The neighbor would not get up. But the man persisted, and so the neighbor finally gave him some food. How much more will God who hears our prayers respond to our need (Luke 11:8,9^{xvii}). *“These with a hungry heart and a broken spirit are the favorites of God.”*^{xviii}

In the Matthew account (15:28^{xix}) Jesus told her that her faith was great. If Jesus said she was a little dog, then she would embrace Him as her Master and her role as a humble part of God’s family. The crumbs were meant for her. It is faith that pleases God, and her response was an expression of faith which pleased Jesus (Hebrews 11:6^{xx}).

³⁰ *And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.* Mark 7:30 Imagine the joy she felt when she arrived home and found her daughter lying peacefully in her bed, no longer tormented. I think that is what she expected to see, yet what a sweet experience when we see the result of our faith. Now this Gentile woman sees herself as a humble part of Jesus’ household.

This woman is a type of all who grow up in a pagan culture. They hear about the great power of Jesus. They are desperate for healing, or for some assurance that they are right with God, and to know that they have found the truth. Even today many people experience God given visions or dreams of Jesus coming to them and inviting them to know Him as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6^{xxi}). I have met some of them and heard their stories. We increasingly find in our own culture those who grew up never knowing that Jesus loves them and died to save their soul. Just as this woman heard from someone of Jesus’ great power to change lives, you can be that person who tells others of how He changed you. Then they may search as this woman did to find the One who can work such a wonder in their life as well.

³¹ *Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.* ³² *And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.* ³³ *And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.* ³⁴ *And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”* ³⁵ *And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.* Mark 7:31-35 Jesus went another day hike north to Sidon and came back to the lake on the eastern side of the Golan Heights probably down one of the roads that led to Hippos. That route would take many days by foot, but it kept them away from the crowds seeking Him. I would guess Jesus used the time to teach His disciples, but we have no account of the exact route or why they took that route.

Remember Jesus was previously on the eastern coast of the lake and the residents asked Him to leave because of the loss of the herd of pigs (5:12,13^{xxii}). After healing the daughter of the Syrophenician, Jesus was staying in an area that is mostly Gentile. He is still avoiding the big Jewish crowds, but perhaps He is also seeing that the Father is directing this last portion of His ministry to Gentiles.

The disciples will struggle reaching out to the Gentile world. It will take an angelic visit and a vision to help Peter realize the Gospel is for all (See Acts 10^{xxiii}). But this ministry to Gentiles should have given them a big clue that God loves the world. This may have taken place near where two roads from the east meet near the port city of

Hippos. That city had the largest dock on the lake. The people brought the deaf and mute man to Jesus, which means the people in that area must have heard about Jesus. We are not told, but I would guess that this man was a Gentile. Maybe they heard about Jesus from the man delivered from the legion of demons which took place a few miles north of Hippos.

It is typical that the deaf cannot make distinct sounds. They imitate what they see in people's mouth movements and feel their vocal cords to try to imitate the sounds.

The people who brought the man begged Jesus to lay His hand on the man. Jesus pulled the man aside. He did not want it to be a show. He was healing out of compassion, not to impress people. He did something we do not see Him repeat. He put His fingers in the man's ears and spit and touched the man's tongue. It would be amazing to restore his hearing, but to give him clear speech would mean the brain and muscles of the mouth, tongue, vocal cords, and lips would also know exactly how to move for each sound which the man had never heard before. Only God can do such a thing.

The Stevens' son specializes in installing cochlear implants to restore hearing. Even then it takes months to learn to distinguish the sounds. But only the power of God can instantaneously restore hearing and perfect speech.

Why did Jesus do it the way He did? He touched the areas that needed to be transformed, but touch alone was not enough. He commanded they be opened. And why did He spit? Jesus only did what He was directed to do by the Father. He was always led by the Holy Spirit. When we get there we can ask Him that question. Suffice to say that is what the Father led Him to do, and the man was instantly and totally healed. His speech was perfect, which is something beyond healing. It was a total rewiring of the hearing and speech portion of the man's brain. Amazing!

We read of these miracles and just know that because He is God's Word in the flesh He could do so (John 1:14^{xxiv}), but we should stop to think about what had to take place in the physical world for the miracle to occur. Then we are the ones who are speechless. He speaks and creation obeys. And notice that He spoke in Aramaic, a form of Hebrew. That was His native language, though He probably also spoke Hebrew, Greek, and some Latin.

³⁶ *And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.* Mark 7:36 We have this repeated scenario where Jesus tells people to not tell anyone about what they witnessed and they do just the opposite (3:12^{xxv}). We have already seen how it hindered Him from entering any towns. The press of the crowd would keep Him from doing anything but healing and preaching. I think we somewhat understand their excitement of having a prophet or the messiah after the long history of silence. The things they heard in the synagogue of how God worked in the past were now happening before their eyes. And for those who knew the Messianic passages, the arrival had come. The words of the prophet Isaiah would be on their minds. ⁵ *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ 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 That would be hard to keep from proclaiming.

One of our most difficult disciplines is learning when not to speak. We all want people to think well of us, so we say unnecessary things, sometimes even detrimental things. Gossip, slander, bad language, improper jokes, but also things for our own vanity

(Colossians 3:8^{xxvi}). Jesus demonstrated the opposite of our human weakness, only saying the things He heard from the Father. We are told to speak things that would edify others (Ephesians 4:29^{xxvii}), that which will build others up. That might be a loving, gentle correction or a word of inspiration, or acknowledging something good the person is doing.

This topic always reminds me of Ida Pierce. Her testimony lives on. It was at her insistence that I became pastor here. She always looked for ways to encourage others. She would watch them express their gift and tell others about it. At every congregational meeting she would have to speak words of praise for several people, expressing the things of Christ that she saw in their lives.

This passage is declaring to us the wonder of our Savior and His unlimited power. He is the focus. But the response of the people is a warning to us to tame our tongues, which James tells us is one of the hardest things to do (James 3:2^{xxviii}). The people surely thought it was right to tell of the wonders they saw, and yet it was disobedience and caused difficulties for Jesus. May God help us to tame our tongues.

³⁷ And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." Mark 7:37 Yes, Jesus does all things well! He takes us through difficulties we need to stretch our faith. He allows hardship to strengthen our resolve. Sometimes He allows things we do not understand, and that is when we learn His ways are higher than our own (Isaiah 55:8^{xxix}). He makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak. But He also makes those deaf to the things of the Spirit to hear and the mouths of the introvert to proclaim the good news.

When D. L. Moody started to preach, he was told he needed to find another profession. He went on to be one of the most powerful preachers in American history. His college that trains pastors is still one of the best in the nation for that purpose. That is just as great a miracle, perhaps greater than a mute person speaking clearly. Jesus does all things well. Whatever He is doing in your life, know that you can trust Him.

What has Jesus done well in your life? Count your blessings. We are too prone to focus on the things that we dislike and are not grateful enough for all the goodness. Why does mankind like to focus on the things that make us miserable, wallowing in our own self-pity rather than focusing on our many blessings: life, knowing Jesus, having the Word, fellowship with the family of God, sustenance, transportation, things people a hundred years ago would not have dreamed of, modern medicine, shelter, clothing, fresh air, clean water and on and on and on. If you only have Jesus and not all these blessings, it would be enough to praise Him forever. **He does all things well!**

Questions:

- 1 Why did Jesus go to the Gentile region?
- 2 Describe the faith of the woman?
- 3 What was Jesus' challenging statement?
- 4 What was it meant to draw from the woman?
- 5 Why did the disciples need to see this?
- 6 What was the contrast with a recent experience?
- 7 What was Luther's view of the passage?
- 8 What was so amazing about this miracle?
- 9 What passage predicted Jesus would do these things?
- 10 What did the people say about Jesus?

ⁱ **Mark 3:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat.

ⁱⁱ **Mark 1:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Mark 9:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.”

^{iv} **Matthew 15:22 (ESV)**

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.”

^v **Matthew 15:23 (ESV)**

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.”

^{vi} **Matthew 15:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

^{vii} **Matthew 8:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

^{viii} **Luke 10:36-37 (ESV)**

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

^{ix} **Mark 8:2 (ESV)**

² “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.

^x **John 4:42-43 (ESV)**

⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” ⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee.

^{xi} **Acts 10:34 (ESV)**

³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,

^{xii} **John 3:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

^{xiii} ¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 174.

^{xiv} **Genesis 1:3 (ESV)**

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

^{xv} **John 1:3 (ESV)**

³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

^{xvi} **James 1:6-8 (ESV)**

⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

^{xvii} **Luke 11:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

^{xviii} R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 175.

^{xix} **Matthew 15:28 (ESV)**

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.

^{xx} **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

^{xxi} **John 14:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

^{xxii} **Mark 5:12-13 (ESV)**

¹² and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

^{xxiii} **Acts 10:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ 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.

^{xxiv} **John 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

^{xxv} **Mark 3:12 (ESV)**

¹² And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

^{xxvi} **Colossians 3:8 (ESV)**

⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

^{xxvii} **Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

^{xxviii} **James 3:2 (ESV)**

² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.

^{xxix} **Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)**

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.