

## **Hitting the Road**

### **Mark 7:24-30**

Getting to hear God speak in His Word that we have and we get to read and study this morning as we return to Mark chapter 7. And as you're turning there, I just want to ask, I bet I could probably identify in my life (and I'm sure you can in yours), has there been a time where you've had some trouble sharing the gospel? And you're like, well, of course. Umm, probably most of us would relate to that. I mean, that's even why we've identified it as so important. We even have a class, Evangelism Explosion, that we've promoted and is off and running to help with that. But I'm not necessarily talking with a lack of knowledge. Maybe you had a hard time sharing the gospel because you felt like you just didn't have the knowledge. Not necessarily that, I'm not saying a hard time sharing the gospel because you just didn't have the guts. Right? You didn't have the courage to get up the nerve necessary to go and talk to someone. I wonder if you've ever (if you can relate to me in this way), if you've ever had trouble sharing the gospel with someone because you just really didn't feel like God wanted to save them? And you think what a terrible thing to say. I know, confessions, true confessions right here. When I was in junior high, I think this was something that would happen. I would kind of go on school campus, and I felt like, okay, I got God's eyes, and I can see this. I know the types of people He would save and the type of people, yeah, He's just not going to save them. So, it's like why bother a little bit, and maybe I'll just stay away from them because, you know, I just... I think I can tell who God's going to save and who He isn't going to save.

And it's just this bias that starts to form in my mind, and so I kind of had that. And obviously, I've hoped that I've grown out of that, and I have a better view, an assessment, of the lost around me. But I think, in many ways, this is still possible for Christianity even today. It's still very possible that we tend to relate with people, and over time, as we relate with them, we kind of go, oh, that's just my cousin. They'll never hear this. Or, yeah, that's just my friend. Yeah, we've gone around and around about this. I just don't even talk to him about it anymore. Or, that's just so-and-so, they just don't like it so we just don't go there. Oh, they already believe this, so I just don't even waste my time and talk about it. And we kind of form this, like, prejudice or bias or favoritism towards certain people that we think, yeah, they might get

saved; let's try them - and think that other people don't need it, don't deserve it maybe. That's obviously completely wrong.

But there's even, probably, a deeper-seated prejudice and bias that we find in the nation of Israel in the time of Jesus. As we think about the Jews that Jesus was ministering to and how obsessed they were with, really, themselves and how they got so fixated upon following the oral traditions set before them and trying to fulfill the Word of God even and being so self-focused, self-centered, that they just basically separated themselves, and they prided themselves on doing this; they were proud about how well they had separated themselves from the world around them. This was in their minds a good thing, the best thing they had - this bias, this deep-seated prejudice against anyone that was not Jewish, the Gentiles, the Greeks. Right? They kept them out, and they loved this place that they had where it was just them, a private club so to speak.

And this is the very thing that Jesus is going to address in our text today, and Mark's actually going to address it, not just in this text, but in the next couple times. As we come back, we get to see Jesus interacting on a whole new front with different people. Alright? Not just Jewish people in Galilee, but beyond. So, let's look at our text Mark 7:24-30 and see this expand beyond. Verse 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. But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 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.' But she answered him, 'Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' And he said to her, 'For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.' And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone."

This interaction that we clearly see with a different kind of person, not a typical Jewish person that's in Galilee or even in Jerusalem for that matter, but someone that's dubbed a Gentile, labeled a Gentile, a Syrophenician. This is different. And this all happens because of verse 24 where we find this retreat, where Jesus retreats in verse 24. It's not super-clear in our text, but if you look at the parallel account in Matthew, you see that Jesus is with His

disciples. So, He is with His disciples, and they decide to withdraw, to withdraw, to retreat as we've seen, to hit the road. Once again, verse 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." So, that sets the scene for us as far as this retreat that is the aim, the ambition, of what is happening in verse 24; "...he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon."

So, from there, where was He? As we looked at the previous verses, 1-23 in chapter 7, we saw that they were in the region of Galilee but not certain exactly where, potentially Capernaum, that's where He did a lot of His ministry and work; but it was clear, you had a Jewish audience. In fact, that's what we saw in verses 1-13. We saw this idea of defilement come up and defilement in the most meticulous and particular of fashions, in hand washing, in food preparation (right?) in bathing and these detailed things that the Pharisees and the experts of the Law, they just prided themselves as those that held fast to this. And it wasn't that they were actually obeying God, but as Jesus reveals, their heart was set on the tradition of men. They were so set on obeying and holding fast to what man had said, the teaching of men that later became written down and known as the Mishna as we have it even to this day. And so, Jesus had to confront that in verses 1-13. And then, in verses 14-23, we see Jesus now take the place of the true authority and explain what God's Word really says.

Since the Pharisees had high-jacked the conversation, and they high-jacked the teaching, and they'd been the ones that were basically indoctrinating the Jewish people with the teaching of men, Jesus then steps in, confronts them, and then upholds the Word of God and teaches the true intent of the defilement laws, the true intent of what it means to be unclean verses clean. And the whole intention behind it was to have a heart that was right before God. Jesus has to come up and throw aside all the teaching of men, everything the Pharisees and scribes had done, and then, instead, say what does God's Word actually teach and why. So, Jesus successfully did that last time. And in a sense, you think, okay, so now we're totally changing it. But we're still dealing with unclean verses clean if you think about it. The last beginnings of the last verses we saw in verses 1-23, we really were dealing with the hand washing and the details of food preparation, but now we see unclean and clean dealing with people - people.

This is the problem with the Jewish people; when they thought of anyone that was not a Jew, they thought unclean - unclean. Just like as they saw the disciples and how they prepared for the meal, they thought that was unclean. So, when they thought of, maybe, someone like this Syrophenician woman or a Gentile, they thought unclean - stay far away. They're prejudice, they had this bias. It's this racist kind of thing going on where they're so against Gentiles - one of the most severe divides that you can find between people groups, and this is what you have with the Jews and the Gentiles.

So, we come to our text in verse 24, and we see Jesus. He's going to take advantage of this. And they leave this Galilean-Jewish area, and they go to the region of Tyre and Sidon. So, where's that? Where's Tyre and Sidon? We get a chance to check it out on the map, and you can see it's not very close. It's pretty far away. In fact, if you just look at those dotted lines, you realize this is out of even the nation of Israel or the region or jurisdiction of Herod and Israel, and you're into now Syria. Syria, which is completely Gentile, and so Tyre and Sidon, these very popular big-name cities, they're on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and we find, very clearly, this is a non-Jewish area. They retreat to get away to a non-Jewish area where you have Gentiles there. And we see in our text in verse 24, they're retreating to this area, and it says, "And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know..." He's trying to be hidden. However, the end of verse 24 tells us the truth; "...yet he could not be hidden." ... "...he could not be hidden." But this was Jesus' attempt. He wanted to be undercover, to be stealth (right?), to be low-key as He came to Tyre and Sidon, to have time with His disciples as He's often tried before.

We've seen Him try to withdraw in a few places previous to this, and what always ends up happening is there's a crowd there. People show up and interruption happens, and so they just... they roll with it. They take the interruption, and Jesus still feeds the people or whatever it is, or He teaches whoever comes, and He takes advantage of the opportunity. In a similar fashion, this is another attempt to withdraw, and then another interruption comes up, and yet, Jesus uses this interruption as a way to teach His disciples. And if you think about it, if He's really trying to retreat, this probably wasn't the perfect place to. It was better, maybe, because previous attempts were across the Sea of Galilee, which isn't that far away, but now, you think, okay, He's really going out of His way. They're going all the way up north into Tyre and Sidon. But if you remember just back in Mark

chapter 3, we learn of the crowds that were following Jesus, and in that, Mark tells us who was following Jesus. Not just a lot of Jewish people, but you had people from all over, and even the other side of the Jordan River. And you had people from Tyre and Sidon, so it's pretty clearly stated, already, in Jesus' ministry, not only is His popularity just in Israel, but it's actually expanded even more to Tyre and Sidon. These people had heard of Jesus. A lot of them have come and become eyewitnesses of Jesus and His ministry. So, the idea of retreating to Tyre and Sidon isn't perfect. It isn't this ideal location, but it's better. It's better than where they were in the Jewish region of Galilee.

So, what's the point? Is He trying to get time with His disciples uninterrupted? Seems like you'd want to go somewhere else because people are still going to recognize Him. If you go to Tyre and Sidon. What about doing ministry in Tyre and Sidon? Maybe that's what Jesus wanted to do, go there and set up a new operation, do tons of miracles again, all new teaching up there. Definitely not. Because the text makes it clear He didn't want anyone to know He was there trying to hide, trying to stay in the house just with His disciples, just with this tightknit group of people, to teach them. Better understanding would be, this is just another intentional withdrawal. Jesus knows what He's doing. He's purposeful. Everything He does has a reason. And so, even in this withdrawal, even in this retreat as He is trying to stay hidden, He still knows that this interruption will come and will be a perfect teaching opportunity, a perfect moment, a set-up, if you will, for what can come, what the disciples can learn and what this woman can demonstrate in her faith.

And so, that's what happens in verses 25-26. We see this interruption and this woman's request - the woman's request in this interaction. Verses 25-26; "But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter." Mark uses his word again "...immediately..." the immediately word in verse 25. This intention to withdraw, this intention to get away, to have quiet time, but immediately that's foiled. Immediately something else happens. Immediately, you have this needy woman come to the scene, a needy woman here that we learn of. Why's she needy? Because she has "...little daughter..." this "...little daughter..." that we don't know the age but we understand is young, and she has this "...unclean spirit..."

And just to remind you as you kind of see later on in the passage, it'll talk about "...the demon..." This is how Mark describes it. If someone might have an unclean spirit, it's the same thing as being demon-possessed. He kind of uses them interchangeably in how he speaks of this.

So, this is the needy woman. She shows up, and she has this daughter that has this demon inside of her - a tragic situation. It's sad, but notice what else we learn about her; "But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him..." She "...heard of..." Jesus, so she might not of necessarily seen Jesus for herself, but as I already mentioned in Mark 3, when there were crowds following Jesus from Tyre and Sidon, they no doubt came back to Tyre and Sidon, and they passed the info along, and they told people, and so this woman was probably there in Tyre and Sidon, hearing about Jesus, hearing about what He'd done, hearing of this wonderful kind of miracle-worker. So, she acts on it. She hears that He's in town, and she responds. She responds to Jesus in full worship and faith. Look at... in our text, it says her "...daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet." ... "...fell down at his feet." That is a strong response. We've seen people falling down before Jesus so far in Mark's gospel as we've learned of even people with demons, they come and they can have thousands of demons in them, and they approach Jesus, and they can't even touch Him. They fall down. They fall down before Him because of His power, His authority.

But not just that, if you think of, maybe, Jairus the synagogue ruler. We saw Him in Mark 5, and he was the one... he had a daughter that was sick, and he came and he fell down before Jesus because he's pleading. He is broken before Him, legitimate faith, worshipping Him even, and that's what's happening here. This woman, what does she know of Jesus? Not much, just through a secondhand report, and yet, here she comes, kind of risking everything, falling down before Him, coming and just falling at His feet - kind of worship scene and a definite expression with faith. Notice we get a little more information about her, that she is a Gentile; "Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth." It'd be enough if we just had it in our text, oh, they went to Tyre and Sidon, so this woman's probably a Gentile, but Mark is making this a point. He doesn't want you to miss it. He wants you to get this. Alright? This interaction is significant because of who this woman is. This interaction's actually important because of the fact that she's "...a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth."

So, to make sure we're clear, and we're all understanding, Mark tells us she's not Jewish. She's not a Jew floating up in Tyre and Sidon where she shouldn't be. She is a Gentile, a non-Jew, that is living in Phoenicia. So, she doesn't have this expectation of a Messiah. She doesn't have the Old Testament Scriptures, probably, readily available to her. She doesn't have people teaching it to her or going to synagogue once a week and hearing people talk on the Sabbath and give lessons on this. She doesn't have any of that. She has no understanding, no idea or expectation, of this Messiah. All she has is this one little report that she gets from these people when they come back and talk about Jesus. She's a Gentile, but not just that, we learn that she's actually a Gentile native of this area. She's a Syrophoenician - Syria-Phoenicia, alright? The Phoenicia and Syria being that whole region up there, and Tyre and Sidon being actual cities in that region; this is who she was "...by birth." ... "...by birth."

And, if you think about this, it doesn't take too long, but as you start to flip through the Old Testament and read about Israel and how they interacted with the nations around them, you start to recognize and hear of nations like Tyre and Sidon and Phoenicia. And you go, oh, how did that work? Were they friends? Did they get along? Were they allies? And the answer's absolutely not! Not at all. We have, really... in Phoenicia and in Tyre and Sidon, you have them spoken of as enemies, just absolute enemies to the nation of Israel. They were completely Gentile. They were inundated in their idol worship. They wanted nothing to do with Yahweh, nothing to do with Israel and the God that they worshipped. In fact, it's interesting because when you do look at some of the kings of Israel, you'll maybe recognize the king Ahab, king Ahab in Israel, and you'll maybe remember, he was a bad king. He was really, really bad, and one of the reasons he was so bad is because he married this woman named Jezebel. Right? The great name Jezebel (right?), he married this woman, Jezebel, but where did she come from? She wasn't a Jew. She came from Tyre and Sidon. She came from this region, and what did she do? She came into the nation of Israel as queen married to king Ahab, and she brought in a whole new system of worship. She brought in this idea of Baal worship. That's what you read over and over again. Why're they worshipping Baal? Who is this other god? And Jezebel is largely, in part, to blame for this. And where'd she come from? ...Tyre and Sidon.

You start to get this picture, and you realize this is not just like, oh, they're a neutral nation, and they do their thing, and the Israelites are down there neutrally doing their thing. These are enemies, and this is not an alliance. They don't get along here, and this is, really, just the reality of kind of how the Jewish people viewed Gentiles in an overall perspective. Think about Peter. This is Peter's words when he is actually starting to branch out and reach out to non-Jewish people, to Gentiles. He starts to interact with Cornelius (alright?), some of these other people that aren't Jewish, and he sees them get saved, and then Peter talks about what God taught him; (Acts 10:28) "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.' " This idea, this kind of brainwashed thinking that they had, that there was this clean and unclean going on, and they followed it to the deep down, to the letter of the Law, and to the detail and the letter of the oral law and what man made up; so much so, that they missed the heart of God. Not just in hand washing, but with people. They were so racist, so opposed to Gentiles, that they just decided to label them unclean for good, and that you stay far away. So, we think of all this, you start to realize that this retreat's kind of a big deal. The fact that Jesus would take His disciples up there is really strange. You think, Jesus this doesn't really jive with the general understanding of the Gentiles that the Jewish people have.

And then, this woman comes up, and you start to realize how big a deal it was for this woman to actually do something about this. Right? Think about all that she's doing in this text. I mean, she's overcoming a lot. There's all these barriers to how she will actually interact with and pursue Christ. And you kind of think, why would she do this? When you start to realize what's stacked up against her, it seems like this is odd for her to actually manifest such faith. Think about, how much does she know about Jesus? Does she think of Him as the Messiah of some sort? No, as we already talked about, she has no knowledge. She's got a little amount of knowledge, maybe a report here or there from someone in her region that told her about Jesus, but it's not much, doesn't matter. You could think, ahh, well, Jesus was trying to be low-key, so it's going to be hard to find Him. She said I don't care. He's around here. I'm going to find Him, and she becomes a detective, and she searches Him out. What house is He staying at? Where can I find Him? Doesn't matter how inconvenient this is, she breaks through that barrier. We think even, also, she, a woman, is coming and approaching a man, and that is

just one of these things in first century A.D., at this time, you don't do that. That's just not how a woman operated in that time. It's a completely different way of cultural interactions, but she doesn't care. She breaks through that barrier. She has faith. She's heard the report of Christ, and she has faith, and she pursues Him.

And then you add this last element, Jesus is clearly a Jew, and here we have this woman definitely a Gentile by birth, and she comes and breaks through that religious so-called barrier to see Christ. It's an amazing faith that's on display. It's a wonderful faith for the disciples to see once again. What does it really mean to follow Christ? Is it based on convenience? Is it based on when it's culturally acceptable? It just happens to work with you if you were born and raised that way, then that's the way it is, and that's how you operate? Not for this woman. It doesn't matter what she was kind of violating in terms of what she knew or what was convenient or what the cultural time and customs demanded, she broke through all that because she had faith, faith in this report, this little report she had of Christ.

And we think about us, and here we are claiming to be Christians, pursuing Christ, following Christ; that's hopefully our faith. But how easily we find barriers, and we set up excuses for why we don't pursue Christ. It's so sad that we kind of think, oh, yeah, this idea - I totally would share the gospel. I would serve in that ministry. I would teach and engage in that opportunity, but I just don't know enough. And right away, our lack of knowledge becomes a legitimate excuse and reason for why we're not going to pursue Christ in that way. Or, we think, yeah, I'd love to spend time in the Word and draw near to God through what He said and in prayer, but you know how it is? It's just busy. It's busy. It's a busy life, busy time, just a busy season. Maybe it'll settle down some sometime down the road. It's an excuse. It's an absolute excuse, and we except it. We think it's okay. That is true. It's a busy time, but, you know, you'll get there. Eventually, you'll get there. And that's just ridiculous. When you think of this woman, think about how inconvenient this was for her, think about how little she knew, think about how little she cared about what people thought as she broke through all this to be with Christ. The reality is true faith is going to bulldoze any excuse. It doesn't matter what the excuse is, true faith will prevail in order to access Christ and to be with Him. And that's the wonderful thing that shines forth in this story, not just God's heart for all people including Gentiles, but

true faith, true faith that is shown, that is stronger than some of the faith that you see even from the Jews and the disciples themselves.

What's odd is what happens next in our story. Look at verse 27, and you find the refusal. How Jesus responds is odd. It doesn't really fit in or tie in with what you're, maybe, expecting or what you would think He would do. Right? Look at verse 27. So, after this amazing effort on her part, "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.'" Ouch! This is harsh. This is a harsh response. It's a harsh way of Jesus basically saying no. He's rejecting her request, and He does it in the sense of this metaphor, and you can see the picture. It's not too complex. When you sit down to eat with your family, you set out the bread, and who's going to eat first? The people, the humans in the family, and if you have a household dog, they'll do their typical thing, and they'll beg, and then you toss them the scraps when you're all fed, and you're all nourished, and you've had your fill, and you give them the leftovers. And that might be hard to relate to because some dogs eat better than I do now days, but I'm just saying, back then this was a very normal picture. Right? Very simple picture, everyone got it. You sit down; of course, you feed your children to their fill. Duh! no question, and if you have some leftovers, sure, throw it to the dog. It's a simple picture. Clearly, the children ought to be fed first, and the scraps can go to the dog.

But what is Jesus exactly saying here? Seems that He's making a distinction. This is what Mark makes such a point of showing that this woman is a Gentile, because Jesus's response hinges on this. When He talks about the children, He's talking about Israel. He's talking about the Jewish people, the people of God; and when He talks about the dogs, He's talking about the Gentiles, people like this woman who are not Jewish. And you think, okay, well, how do you make that connection? Seems like a bit of a stretch. Well, if you just read the rest of the passage, it seems like the woman gets it, but on top of that, when you look through some of the Old Testament writings, you can see, it appears that over and over and over again in the Old Testament, the Israelites, the Jewish people, are described as God's children. Deuteronomy 14:1; "You are the sons of the Lord your God." Jeremiah 31:9; "With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim [another term

for Israel] is my firstborn.” So, this is the understanding that the Israelites were the children of God.

But the Gentiles are referred to as dogs. Dogs! And you think, doesn't sound very good because it's not right. It's not. It's not a good title. It's not like, oh, I'd rather be a dog. That sounds really cool. No, that's a bad thing that they're deemed dogs. I mean, really, in the idea of dog in this, it's not like a wild kind of ravenous creature. It's more of like the household pet in this sense, and even Gentiles had this, and they could relate to it which is why it works when Jesus talks with this woman. But if you were to look at some of the, even the, Jewish writings in the Mishnah and the Talmud, how the Jews viewed Gentiles is pretty similar to this; “Whoever eats together with an idol worshiper or a Gentile is like one who eats together with a dog...” This is how they viewed Gentiles. The Jews elevated themselves. They're the people of God, the children of God - and all you Gentiles are dogs. Right? You're dogs. And so, you think, Jesus this is so harsh. This is not your typical response to people when they come to You in faith. What is He doing here? What Jesus is doing is He's stating there's an order to how the promises of God come about. There's not like there's a rejection taking place where He's saying, sorry, nothing for you ever. Notice how He says the word “...first...” ... “Let the children be fed first...” There's an order to this, and this isn't something that Jesus is, like, just now starting or coming up with or establishing. This is the way it's been.

When God called Abraham and promised him (Genesis 12:2), “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” Abraham and all of his descendants, the nation of Israel, will be a blessing, and verse 3 explains that more; “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” This was the order; God pouring into the nation of Israel, and then the nation of Israel overflowing in blessing to the other nations of the world. As we know, the nation of Israel did not do a great job. They were disobedient. They failed numerous times, so they didn't become a blessing to the nations, and that required God to send someone, the Servant that we learn of in Isaiah. In Isaiah 49:6 (this is one of the few places that it talks of the Servant), when God's speaking to the Servant, here's the mission for the Servant, “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...” So, the mission for the Servant won't just be

Israel, instead the end says, “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” You see, Jesus isn’t saying too bad, so sad, Gentiles. It’s all about the Jews, and you all just missed out. Sorry. No. He’s saying something that’s consistent with and in line with what already has been said, and that is that God has a heart for all of the nations. He always has. God isn’t this bias God that only cares about certain people and doesn’t care about others. He clearly cares for all, and Jesus would ultimately fulfill that in His death and resurrection.

But this is the salvation plan, that first, the good news would go to the Jews, and then they would spill over to the Gentiles. That was the plan. In fact, that was the model that even Paul affirmed in the beginning of Romans, this famous verse of how (Romans 1:16); “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes [but how does this get carried out?], to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” This is what happened in the book of Acts. As the gospel went, they continued to preach to the Jews first, the people of promise, the people, descendants of Abraham, and then that would flow into the Gentiles as well. This is just the system, the plan of how it would come about, and that’s what Jesus is affirming here. So, despite this situation where you think... even in Matthew’s account, we learn that the disciples say send her away. She’s annoying. Jesus, we don’t want to deal with this woman. Jesus is willing to interact with her, and He’s willing to do this to prove a point to His disciples. What is God’s heart for? Just like the hand washing and the uncleanness there, what was the whole point of that? Was it devotion and wholehearted commitment to God or was it just the way you washed your hands? And now with this, with the Gentiles, how do we treat them? Is it all about just calling them unclean and seeing how far away you can keep them from yourself? Or, was it to manifest the heart of God that they may be drawn to Him, that they might truly worship Him just as you, the privileged Israelites, have been able to worship Him?

It’s a funny thing, and here Jesus is not being mean to this woman; He’s actually setting her up. He’s setting her up for an even greater demonstrating of faith that comes in what follows, and that’s in verses 28-30 where we find the woman’s reward - the woman’s reward. Verse 28; “But she answered him, ‘Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.’ And he said to her, ‘For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.’ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and

the demon gone.” So, what is Jesus doing? It’s a lot like, in parallel fashion, to when He was walking, and the crowds were pressing in on Him as He was trying to make His way to Jairus’s daughter, and then all a sudden this woman that’s been bleeding for years comes up and just tries to touch His garment, and when she does, she gets healed. And what does Jesus do? He stops and says, “Who touched my garments?” And in that moment, you have to ask does Jesus legitimately not know? Does He really not know who touched Him? Does He really not know what just happened? And the answer is obviously not. He knows, but in stopping and making a point of this, it allowed the opportunity for this woman to come forward and to explain her situation and for everyone to hear true faith. Everyone got to see true faith when that woman went out of her way just to try and touch Jesus’s garment.

And so in the same way here, when Jesus is saying this to this woman, it gives her the opportunity to respond in the way that she does, which is this; “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.” This is amazing. Right? Rather than her saying how dare you call me a dog, she embraces it. She says I know! I know I’m a Gentile. I know I’m not one of God’s chosen in the nation of Israel. I get that, but I do know how this works. I know that as You bless and feed even Your people, that it does spill over to us, so I understand my situation. I am a begging dog, and I’m longing for a few crumbs. She admits that. Amazing faith! This is incredible faith that she has. What a perfect opportunity to just say, okay, forget you. I’m gone. I’m going to find someone else to try and help my daughter. Amazing faith, that she sticks with it, and she actually has the understanding, the knowledge to know that, yeah, I know I’m a Gentile, but I know how You work. I know as You bless this people, it will in turn bless us, and so I will gladly acknowledge that. This is an incredible statement of faith and a further opportunity to show the mission and the heart of God. God’s not biased, and is not showing His favoritism. He has love for and cares for all the whole world, and this is a perfect demonstration of it as we will continue to see in Mark’s gospel in the next two passages that come as well.

So, Jesus responds; “For this statement...,” because of what you just said, this continued demonstration of faith, “...you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.” This is the only time in Mark where Jesus heals from a distance. She’s not there. The little girl’s not there. We don’t even know where she is, how far away she is, but Jesus says go ahead, you can leave. She’s healed; a demonstration of more authority and power and an

affirmation of how God feels about even Gentiles. He cares. He loves them, and to confirm that this was in fact so, that Jesus was not just saying words, we have the end; “And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.” It was fulfilled. Jesus uses this as an opportunity to do both, show the heart of God for the nations as well as highlight true faith - something that He’s going to continue to pound into these disciples because they’re slow. They’re slow to understand, but He’s going to continue to pound into them what it means to have true faith, and He’ll have to go to a radical extent to not just showing what it looks like, but even demanding that they give up their life for the sake of Him; that’s what it means, true faith, wholehearted commitment.

But, specifically, here in our text, where does it leave us with how we view people around us? The lost are all around us. How do you view them? Do you have this kind of filter that you’re working with where you start to see people, and you see certain ones as, yeah, God will probably save them, but not them? Or, I don’t feel like it? We slip right into this idea of, yeah, we’re trying to find people that would fit nice in my church and my growth group, and, oh, they’d probably bring good snacks, too. Yeah, I’m going to try and share with them. Alright? What kind of thinking is this? This is what we do though. We get so wrapped up in that that we’ve lost the heart of God. We’ve lost the commitment that He has the desire to bless the nations. He desires to utilize His church now to be ambassadors to the world, to take this message out. You don’t get to decide who gets it and who doesn’t. You don’t get to decide who’s in and who’s not. You simply take this message and model what Christ did. You have compassion on all. You have mercy on all. You love all with this message of truth of Jesus Christ. May that be the truth of our church as we try to minister here in the Antelope Valley.