

The Story of the Canaanite Woman

Matthew 15:21–29 (NKJV)

²¹Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

²²And 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.”

²³But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”

²⁴But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

²⁵Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

²⁶But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

²⁷And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

²⁸Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

²⁹Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there.

- *In this story Jesus appears to be uncharacteristically harsh and uncaring.*
- *Sometimes the Lord deals with us in our times of need in ways that may appear as if He is uncaring or distant, but He is neither.*
- *We must trust His character even when circumstances seem to contradict it and that is what we call faith.*
- *The reason that we sometimes find ourselves in circumstances that seem to contradict the caring, loving and faithful character of God is because we see only a small part of the picture and we do not see the eternal results that He is wanting to accomplish in us.*

Matthew 12:19–21 (NKJV)

¹⁹He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.

²⁰A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory;

²¹And in His name Gentiles will trust.”

- *This passage from Matthew 12 is quoted from Isaiah 42:3 and it describes the heart and minister of the Messiah.*
- *“He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets” – Jesus does not force Himself upon anyone but is gentle so that only those that hear His gentle voice calling them and respond will find Him.*
- *“A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench” – Anyone who comes to Christ, no matter how crushed or weak they are, He will not reject nor turn away but will gently receive, comfort and heal them.*
- *“Till He sends forth justice to victory” – Jesus is not only gentle but also all powerful so that even the most battered and broken lives can walk in the totally victory of Christ.*
- *“And in His name Gentiles will trust” – Jesus died to save all, both Jews and Gentiles, for He created and loves everyone.*

Mark 10:21–22 (NKJV)

²¹Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

²²But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

- *In Mark 10 we see the story of a rich young man who comes to Jesus.*
- *Jesus’ heart is moved with love toward the young man but then out of His mouth comes the harshest words that young man could have ever heard, “sell whatever you have and give it to the poor.”*
- *Jesus knew that covetousness had such a strong grip on this young man that until he chose to put God before everything else he would never be able to truly be a follower of Jesus.*

- *Through difficult experiences God is either dealing with us to purges us of things that will easily destroy us or to bring out in us the beauty of Christ that is still under the surface.*
- *When we study the Bible we must study each individual verse from the vantage point of the entire counsel of God's Word.*
- *When we study the life of Jesus we was must do so from the vantage point of knowing and trusting what the Bible tells us about Who He is.*
- *In the story of the Canaanite woman Jesus' actions and words seems to contradict a number of these truth found in Isaiah 42:3 about His gentleness and unconditional love for all people.*
- *Jesus seemed to ignore the plight of this woman and the main reason appeared to be because she was a Gentile.*
- *Sometimes Jesus' words and actions may appear harsh or uncaring but in reality they are sometimes the most gracious and wonderful things He could say to us.*
- *In this story, we will see Jesus' two-pronged purpose.*
- *One was to deal with hidden attitudes that would oppose the purposes of God and the second one was to bring to light some wonderful things that were hidden.*

John 6:65 (NKJV)

⁶⁵And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

- *The first truth we must understand about encountering God is that He is the One who has been seeking us out and not the other way around.*
- *When Adam and Eve fell into sin they were the ones hiding and it was God who was calling out to them.*
- *The shepherd is the one who seeks out the lost sheep because the sheep are too dumb to know they are even lost.*

- *Thus the very first point in Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman was that the Father was the One who drew her to Jesus.*
- *Not only did the Father draw this Gentile woman to Jesus but also Jesus made a special trip to meet her.*

Matthew 15:21 (NKJV)

²¹Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

- *At the beginning of the story Jesus for no apparent reason departs from Israel and travels to a region of the Gentiles!*

Matthew 15:29 (NKJV)

²⁹Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there.

- *After Jesus had finished with His encounter with this Canaanite woman He then return back to the land of Israel.*
- *It appears from Scripture that the only thing Jesus did on this trip to Tyre and Sidon was to meet with this Gentile woman and then immediately return back to Israel.*

Matthew 15 (NKJV)

²²And 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."

- *"a woman of Canaan came from that region" – The woman did not leave her country to meet Jesus but Jesus had come to her region to meet her!*
- *She 'cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.'" – We can see the severe distress this woman was in as she cried out to Jesus.*
- *"Have mercy on me" – She believed that Jesus was merciful and she acted on that faith and called out to Him for mercy.*

- *“Son of David!” – Even though she was a Gentile woman, she somehow understood that Jesus was the Messiah, the Promised Saviour and He was all-powerful to save and deliver.*
- *“My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” – She was humble enough to fully disclose the very depth of her struggles and problems.*
- *“Have mercy on me” – When we come to Jesus we must believe He is merciful and is touched by our sorrows, struggles and fears.*
- *“Son of David!” – We must believe that He is the Saviour and no problem, sickness, or circumstance is difficult for Him.*
- *“My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” – We must humble ourselves and disclose to Him all our needs and failures.*

²³But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”

- *“But He answered her not a word” – Jesus’ response appears cold and uncaring.*
- *Jesus did not rebuke her but simply appeared to ignore her.*
- *‘And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”’ – At the same time that Jesus is silent towards her, His disciples are telling Him, “send her away, she is such a pest.”*
- *Imagine how she could have felt humiliated by these circumstances. Jesus was ignoring her and His disciples were urging Him to send away this pesky lady.*

²⁴But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

- *Jesus’ response is very interesting because He did not address the complaint of His disciples but ignored their request and addressed the Gentile woman in quite an unusual way.*
- *“I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” – Jesus response basically would have echoed the thoughts of His disciples, “I am not here to help you Gentiles but I am here for the Jews.”*

²⁵Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

Matthew 15:25 (NASB95)

²⁵But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

- *Her response to Jesus’ words was not discouragement, dismay or anger but she fell at His feet and bowed down worshipping Him and pleaded for His help.*
- *In spite of His words she displayed a perseverance and faith in His goodness and mercy.*
- *Are there times when God does not seem to be answering us and we feel discouraged, dismayed or angry?*
- *If that is the case, it is because we still do not fully trust in His character but are seeking for continual reassurance of His goodness and faithfulness.*

²⁶But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

- *The Greek word for “little dogs” is κυνάριον kynarion and it refers to those pets that are allowed to live in the house as opposed to yard dogs or dogs that roam the streets.*
- *Jesus’ response to the woman’s plight may appear as if He is degrading her and again His words would have echoed the thoughts and values His disciples would have held as Jews in regards to Gentiles.*

²⁷And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

- *“Yes, Lord” - This is the second time she addresses Jesus as Lord. Some others that approached Jesus addressed Him as teacher or Rabbi but she acknowledged Him as Lord.*
- *I have heard carnal Christians say, “If that is the way God is going to treat me then I am not going to serve Him” showing that they neither understand nor embrace the Lordship principle of Jesus Christ in their lives.*
- *This Canaanite woman acknowledged Jesus’ position as Lord and she was not*

asking something from Him from the point of view of entitlement but of mercy.

- *“yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”
– Her response to Jesus’ words shows that she was appreciative for whatever He would do for her.*
- *Christians can many times be oblivious to the many blessings that God is pouring out on them because there are a few things in their lives they don’t like, but this Gentile woman was satisfied with the crumbs.*

Ephesians 5:20 (NKJV)

²⁰**giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

- *The principle of thanksgiving will crucify the sin of entitlement that so easily defiles and controls us.*
- *If through Christ’s death and resurrection He had given us eternal life and had not made us children of God, it would have been enough.*
- *If He had made us His children but had not given us His Word so we could know Him and His love for us, it would have been enough.*
- *If had given us His Word so we could know Him and His love for us but had no further purpose for our lives on this earth, it would have been enough.*
- *If He had further purposes for our lives on this earth but had not given us His Spirit to comfort and strength us through the trials of this life, it would have been enough.*
- *If He had given us His Spirit but did not promise us eternal rewards for serving Him on this earth, it would have been enough.*
- *If He had promised eternal rewards but had not promised to give us joy and peace through the trials of this life, it would have been enough.*
- *But He has done all this and so much infinitely more for us so that only in eternity will we be able to comprehend what Jesus has fully done for us.*
- *“yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”*

– This Gentile woman in her humility and confidence in the goodness of Jesus was free from the sin of entitlement and was appreciative of even “the crumbs” of God mercy.

- *The crumbs of God’s mercy are greater than all the riches of this world but He does not just want to give us the crumbs but He desires to pour out all the riches of His mercy and grace upon us.*

Romans 8:32 (NKJV)

³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

- *Many times God blesses someone but soon they lose their attitude of thanksgiving because the sin of entitlement robs them of the joy and peace and replaces it with selfishness and discontentment.*

Luke 19:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’

- *If we can learn to be thankful and content with the small things that God gives us He then will entrust us with great things.*
- *At the conclusion of the story we can see the real motivation and purposes that Jesus had for this encounter with this Gentile woman.*

²⁸Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

- *“O woman, great is your faith!” – Jesus engineered the circumstances to reveal something wonderful about this woman. She was a great woman of faith!*
- *If Jesus had simply healed her daughter when she first approached Him neither the disciples nor the Canaanite woman herself would have come to know the great deposit of faith that God had placed within her.*
- *Also this encounter caused her to step out in faith as she faced opposition and this resulted in her faith to actually grow and deepen.*

- *Only in the face of great opposition can our faith be strengthened, refined and deepened.*
- *There are times when the Lord may appear distant, silent or uncaring but in reality He is wanting us in those times of silence to stand upon the truth of His character.*
- *Can we delight in God's faithfulness in times of silence as much as we do when He performs a visible instantaneous miracle?*

- *"Let it be to you as you desire." - She had the delight of not only having her daughter delivered from her terrible affliction but now she had a revelation that she indeed had great faith in Jesus Christ!*

- *"And her daughter was healed from that very hour." - It was Jesus' desire all along to heal her daughter from this terrible affliction.*

- *However, Jesus was dealing not only with this Canaanite woman but also with His disciples and with us!*

- *His disciples, like most Jews at the time, looked down upon the Gentiles and did not see that God's plan of salvation and love included them.*

- *Very soon Christ would die for the sins of all mankind and He was going to raise up a Church of "one new man" where both Jews and Gentiles would be equal and partake equally.*

- *Even though the Old Testament contained many revelations that God's plan of salvation extended and included the Gentiles, prejudice had blinded the Jewish hearts and minds.*

- *Jesus was beginning to sow seeds in the hearts of His disciples that later would prepare the way for them to receive the Gentiles into His Church.*

- *When Jesus began to speak to the Canaanite woman in a way that appeared insensitive to her plight, it actually echoed the prejudice in the hearts of His disciples.*

- *Sometimes we can give different values to people depending upon how we view*

them and this is called prejudice.

- *When Jesus commended her as a great woman of faith and then healed her stricken daughter it would have been a shocking wake up call for the disciples who had totally ignored her plight and suffering and desired to drive her away because she was an inconvenience.*
- *One moment the disciples were distaining her and looking down upon this Gentile dog and the next moment Jesus spoke words to her that His disciples never had received, “great is your faith.”*
- *Jesus words to His disciples were in the line of, “don’t be afraid, you of little faith, why did you doubt?”*
- *Their perspective would have quickly changed from the pride of being Jesus’ special disciples to the humiliating realization that they were men who lacked both faith and love.*
- *This encounter did a work in the hearts of the disciples that along with other things that they experienced and learned prepared them to be those apostles of absolute love and faith to bring forth Christ’s Church on a firm foundation.*
- *I am absolutely confident that after Christ’s resurrection she became part of Christ’s Church and a devoted follower of Jesus.*
- *The faithfulness of this woman is recorded in both the Gospel of Matthew and Mark in honour of her and also so that we can study and learn from her faithfulness.*

Matthew 15:29–30 (NKJV)

²⁹Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there.

³⁰Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them.

- *The story ends with Jesus returning back to the Land of Israel and ministering healing to great multitudes of lame, blind, mute, maimed and many others that*

came to Him but only after He had taken a very special trip to meet one Canaanite woman of great faith.

- *Some here have never put their faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord but today He is calling you and He will not turn any away that come.*
- *Some here have been struggling because God seems to be silent as you are going through a time of trials or temptations but today is an opportunity to declare our faith in His faithfulness and goodness to us, even though we cannot see the final outcome yet.*
- *Some here having been learning to trust in God even in the face of uncertainty and we can rejoice in that and also ask Him to strengthen us even more so that our faith will become unshakable.*