Jesus Blesses A Humble Woman.

Mark 7:24-30

Key verse 28 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

In today’s passage Jesus meets a Greek woman. Jesus met a Samaritan woman, whose blood was mixed with the Gentiles. Jesus freed a man possessed by a legion of demons, who lived in the Gentile territory. However, this Greek woman was the first “real” Gentile who came to Jesus by faith and received Jesus’ salvation. Let’s learn about her humble attitude and faith today.

After the confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus withdrew to Tyre, which was a Gentile territory. Jesus wanted to keep his presence secret. Maybe Jesus wanted to avoid too much tension with the Pharisees or have a quality time with his disciples, away from demanding crowds. However, it did not last long. One Greek woman born in Syrian Phoenicia came to Jesus right after she heard about Jesus. Since Alexander the Great occupied the area, many Greeks came and settled down there. Her ethnicity was Greek. Jesus helped many people who were not pure Jews before. But until then, no Greek came to Jesus.

What made her come to Jesus? What was a serious problem she had? “The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.” She had one daughter, who was demon-possessed. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. She cried out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." She cried out very loudly kneeling down completely. In Matthew’s Gospel, the disciples could not bear with this woman’s sad and desperate begging. They wanted to send her away.

From her, what can we learn? I can learn from her true love for her daughter. It would not be hard to imagine a life with a demon-possessed daughter. She might not have normal daily life because of the daughter. She could not make a living because she had to pay attention to her for 24 hours and 7 days. She had to witness that her daughter hurt herself. She had to hear her daughter’s crazy shouting. Whenever she imagined her daughter’s future, her heart got broken. She searched every means to heal her daughter as best as she could, using all her energy and money. In spite of her efforts, the daughter’s condition got worse. But she did not give up the daughter. I don’t think that such love is natural at least these days. This mother’s love challenges me to think about my love. If my daughter is demon-possessed, can I love her as this woman did?

When I was young, I thought that I was not happy because of my not-handsome-face or poor sports ability. In college, I thought that I would be happy if I had a better brain and a beautiful girlfriend. But now I realize more and more that I am not happy because I don’t have even one person in my heart whom I can love sacrificially and unconditionally. My selfish mind prevents me from loving one single person including family members not to mention Jesus. I want to be a person who can cry out for someone, even a single person. I pray that our missionaries, leaders and students may become a man of love and a man of prayer with a broken heart. God so loved us that he gave his one and only Son Jesus. God would have cried out for our suffering under demonic oppression. His love is crazy. May God help us to know God’s love more and deeper and practice his love toward our family members and 1:1 Bible students!

When this Greek woman came, what were Jesus’ first words to her? Let’s read verse 27 together. “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” This woman asked Jesus to drive out the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus is suddenly talking about bread. Bread is indispensable for human’s life. But to Jesus, bread is more than mere bread. After Jesus fed the five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, the crowd wanted to make Jesus king who can feed them endlessly free of charge. Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Bread here is not one loaf of bread but life from Jesus, eternal life.

Look at verse 27 again. “‘First let the children eat all they want,’ he told her, ‘for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.’” Here “the children” refer to the people of Israel. God had chosen Israel out of all the nations to be adopted as his firstborn son. God had made a covenant with Israel based on his promises to Abraham. In terms of this covenant, Israel enjoyed special favor among the nations. God had said, “...out of all nations, you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” God had been faithful to this covenant, even if Israel had not. Jesus absolutely respected God’s order and plan in salvation work. It is amazing that Jesus respected the Pharisees on the basis of this covenant, even though they were so malicious and wicked. Jesus stood on God’s side and his shepherd heart for Israel was burning hot, even then.

Jesus referred to the Gentile people, including the woman, as “dogs.” It is interesting that the word used here does not refer to wild street dogs, but to cute pet dogs. But still, the word used is “dog.” This reveals that God really did make a distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles, and it mattered to Jesus. In light of God’s covenant with Israel, the Gentiles were dogs. According to Jesus, they did not deserve to share the children’s food or the children’s blessings. The time would come, but it was not then.

What was her response? Let’s read verse 28 together. ““Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”” She wasn’t upset. Maybe she might have been upset and embarrassed, but to her, being called a dog didn’t matter if she could move Jesus’ heart and received his grace. She exalted Jesus by saying “Yes, LORD.” She agreed and accepted that she was a dog. And she found out hope in Jesus’ saying. She instantly got an idea that a dog has a small right as a possession of the owner. A dog has a right to have some crumbs from the table. She believed small crumbs of bread would be enough for her daughter.

She knew how amazing God’s grace and generosity is. She believed that even small amount of grace would be enough. In mathematics, there is a term “infinity”. Infinity is not a number. Give me any number. Infinity is bigger than any number you can imagine. An interesting thing is that very tiny fraction of infinity is still infinity. Jesus’ bread is like infinity. Crumbs of his bread are more than enough! It was for the people who do not deserve his grace. In fact, the Gentiles didn’t do anything for God. They did not seek God at all. They did not obey God obviously. But God, as he promised, blessed the Gentile woman with this same infinite grace.

Before we met Jesus, we were like a dog. We had no connection with God. We neither glorified our Creator God nor gave thanks to Him. We treated ourselves like God. We followed our sinful desires. We did many shameful things secretly or proudly. As a consequence, we suffered with bitterness and grief. With burdens of sins, we were tired and weary, losing all hope. We wanted to be loved but were disappointed and rejected. We wanted to boast ourselves but failed miserably. We envied. We hated. We were indifferent. We were ruthless and heartless. We enjoyed slandering. We disobeyed parents.

But, our Lord Jesus didn’t give us up. On the night of last supper, Jesus took bread and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” His body is the bread that Jesus wanted to give her. She just wanted crumbs of bread. The crumbs have life which is Jesus’ own life. It was not just driving the demon out of her daughter. A mere problem solving is not what the bread meant. Our LORD Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross to give us forgiveness of sins, to give us his flesh and blood as our true source of life.

What attitude should we take to have this bread? We should be humble like this Greek woman. LORD, I am a dog. I don’t deserve this bread. Please let me have this bread. I thank you for your bread. I thank you! I thank you!

We must examine our faith. Did we receive this bread? Did we receive the bread of life, Jesus’ life? Jews were proud of keeping God’s law and many religious traditions. It did not guarantee their salvation. To us, confession of faith and baptism or attending church became like a guarantee of salvation. Many American gospel workers simplified the gospel very much. They love to quote Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” If we think that we are saved because of our confession, I urge you to check again the confession that you made. I truly believe that we have salvation only by faith in Jesus. We don’t need anything else. But how can we know that we have faith in Jesus?

We should hear Jesus’ warning with holy fear. Matthew 7:21 says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” If we confess that Jesus is Lord, then Jesus is our Lord from then on. Jesus is not like an entrance ticket for the kingdom of God. Jesus is not a magic wand or guardian angel for making our marks better and getting us a good job. If Jesus is our Lord, then he is the owner of life, and we need to listen to him. How can we call him Lord when we don’t do what he asks?

We should humbly ask Jesus, like this woman, to give us the bread of life. We were dogs. We should come to Jesus with holy fear and a broken heart!

What was Jesus’ response to the Greek woman’s humble answer? Jesus told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” In Matthew we can see Jesus praised this woman’s faith greatly, ‘Woman, you have great faith’. Jesus blessed this humble woman of faith abundantly. Her daughter became free from the demon completely. But I believe it was not a main blessing. The true blessing is that she received bread from Jesus, the life of Jesus. As a Greek Gentile, she came to Jesus with great faith and humbleness and received God’s grace to be his child even before Jesus’ death and resurrection.

From her, we can learn that Jesus blesses the humble who admit their reality and limitation. We need to say to Jesus, “Yes, Lord, I’m like a dog who doesn’t deserve your blessing.” Jesus blesses those who desperately cry out to him, believing his infinite love and mercy. We learn that his love and mercy is infinite so that we can come to him as we are no matter how we don’t deserve. May God help us to go to Jesus and receive his bread, so that we may have his life to the full!