

Sermon outline and notes:

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## Mark 7:24-30 “Help for Hurting Parents”

Intro. At this point in the Gospel of Mark, the author begins to report a new phase in the ministry of Jesus. The Great Galilean Ministry (1:14-7:23) has now been completed. During that lengthy ministry Jesus mainly spent His time in Capernaum and vicinity. He was often surrounded by large crowds. Now He & His 12 disciples withdraw from the crowds into what was largely Gentile territory.<sup>1</sup> Notice what it says in the first part of v.24, “From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon...” This was about 50 miles to the NW, along the Mediterranean Sea. This is the only recorded instance of our Lord actually leaving Palestine, beyond the political and religious jurisdiction of the leaders of Israel.

Why did Jesus depart from Galilee, and go into another country? There were several reasons. First of all, He wanted to spend more time teaching His Disciples, & preparing them for the ministry they would take up upon His departure back to heaven. He fully realized that the cross was not far away. Accordingly, He expounded to the Twelve the lessons of the cross (8:31; 9:31). Secondly, He withdrew to get away from the frenzy of the politically oriented people who wanted to force Christ to be king (Jn. 6:15). They wanted Him to gather an army around Him, and overthrow the Romans. They were looking only for political power, free food, and whatever else Jesus might provide for them. Thirdly, He withdrew from His opposition to avoid a premature crisis. The religious leaders were plotting His death, for He was undermining their religious stature in the community. Then there was mounting opposition from Herod, the ruler of Galilee. He feared that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead (Mark 6:14), and He might have arrested Jesus, & even put to death. Finally, the main reason given in the text was that He went there to rest. This is evident from the fact that v.24 goes on to say that “He entered a house and wanted no one to know it...” Jesus did not want anyone to know He was there, for that would be the only way He could find rest from the crowds. He needed a vacation! But naturally the presence of Jesus leaked out, so we read “He could not be hidden,” and therefore He could not fully rest. He had become well known even as far away as Tyre and Sidon (Mark 3:8<sup>2</sup>). The good news of His being among them would stir hope in some hearts that felt the need of His help.

By the way, many sermons have been preached on the words, “But He could not be hidden.” Could that not illustrate the truth that when Jesus has entered a man’s heart, this fact will soon reveal itself in the man’s words, action, and attitudes? When Jesus is really present in a church, He cannot be hidden. He will manifest His presence.

Now the focus of my message today will be upon a mother who was burdened by the condition of her daughter. I am probably speaking to at least some parents here today who are burdened because of some problem or affliction that your child is facing. This text gives us a beautiful picture of how faith in Jesus can lead to salvation or deliverance. If you are burdened over some problem your child is facing, I will show you how you can find hope in Jesus. And this pathway of victory applies to any problem you are facing. So let’s see first of all:

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<sup>1</sup> This phase of Jesus’ ministry begins at this point (7:24) and continues through 10:52. It included time spent in the largely Gentile territory on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

<sup>2</sup> “...from beyond the Jordan; and they about, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him.”

## I. THE PROBLEM OF THIS MOTHER

Do you feel that you are facing some problems today? Perhaps the Christmas holidays only highlighted problems that you have in your family, or in your financial condition. Perhaps it wasn't a Merry Christmas. Well this woman had an even greater problem! You see, her daughter was demon possessed! According to v.25, this woman who came to Jesus had a "young daughter [who] had an unclean spirit..." Matthew's account indicates that she was "severely demon-possessed" (15:22). Demon possession was a very terrible affliction. It usually manifested itself in sinful, self-destructive behavior & mental illness. The unclean spirit within her probably caused her to utter profanity & hateful language. She had no self-control. She saw her in a condition in which no instruction or warning could reach the mind, and no medicine could heal the body. What made the situation even worse is the fact that this girl was "young," or "little" (*thugatrion*-v.25a). She was probably only 8-11 years old. This comes as a warning that even a little child in pagan, non-Christian society is susceptible to being demonized. But that term "young daughter" was also a term of endearment. No doubt her daughter was very, very dear to her. As a result, she was oppressed with a very deep sorrow.

We may not have as much demon possession in our society today, but outside influences can certainly possess our children, and turn them into something quite different from what they were raised to be. Some parents would be shocked at the kind of profanity their children utter to their friends when you are not around. Too many of our children are getting possessed by drugs & alcohol. Our children become badly influenced by the immorality of popular culture. Our kids may become rebellious and even get into legal trouble. Is your child suffering from any of these problems?

When there is a problem with a child, it becomes the parent's problem as well, does it not? In Matthew's account she says to Jesus, "Have mercy on me..." (15:22). Then later she said, "Lord, help me!" (v.25). Though she mentioned the condition of her daughter, she emphasized her own need of help as a desperate mother. She probably spent many a sleepless night because of her daughter's condition. Parents, can't you identify with this? When your child is sick, or having trouble, it affects you. Children, when you get into any kind of trouble, it not only affects you, but it affects your parents as well.

Now she had heard of Jesus as far away as Phoenicia, and she believed that the Lord could help her. So notice secondly,

## II. THE PRAYER OF THIS MOTHER

The mother came to Jesus interceding on behalf of her daughter. In v.25 it says “she came and fell at His feet...” Matthew’s account says that she worshipped Jesus (15:25). The Greek word for “worshipped” (*proskuneo*) means that she bowed down in worship. That’s one position of prayer. I prefer to pray on my knees. Then in v.26 it says, “she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.” She brought her request to Jesus. She interceded on behalf of her daughter. Her deep need made her bold and persistent, though she was a Gentile woman. She was doing what many a mother has done for her child. She prayed & interceded for her daughter. Hopeless and desperate as her daughter’s case appeared, she had a praying mother, and where there is a praying mother there is always hope.

Few duties are so strongly recommended by Scriptural teaching & example as the duty of praying for others. God chooses to do great things for souls when friends and family are moved to pray for them. Fathers and mothers can give their children a Christian education, and show them the way of life; but they cannot give them a will to choose to love & serve God. Yet there is one thing we can always do; we can pray for them. We can pray for their salvation when they are lost in sin. Even when they will not let us speak to them about our faith, they cannot prevent us from speaking to God on their behalf. We can pray for their safety & return when they stray from God. We can pray for their healing when they are sick. So parents, we need to be like this mother, and pray to the Lord Jesus on behalf of our children.

Speaking of prayer, James 1:6 says, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” So we not only see the prayer of this mother, but also:

## III. THE PROPERTIES OF FAITH THAT WE NEED

In Matthew’s account of this story, Jesus later said to her, “...great is your faith...” (15:28). The Greek root word for “great” is *mega*. So Jesus tells a woman that she had *mega* faith.<sup>3</sup> She found the answer by looking to Jesus, and asking with great faith. Likewise, if you want your child to receive salvation, or healing, or deliverance from Jesus, you need to exercise the kind of faith that this mother had. So let’s consider together four properties of her faith.

A. Faith Comes by Hearing – Notice in v.25 that she “heard about Him...” How did this woman come to believe in Jesus? It was by what she had heard about Jesus. Romans 10:17 says, “So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” The woman who came to Jesus had heard enough about His works to be convinced of who He was. Matthew’s account says she addressed Him as “O Lord, Son of David!” That was a Messianic term! She believed that He was Lord over demons, sickness, and every other problem faced by man.

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<sup>3</sup> It is significant that the two times in the Gospel record when Jesus commended “great faith,” He was responding to the faith of Gentiles and not Jews: this Syrophenician woman and the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:5-13). Furthermore, “great faith” is a relative term. The woman’s faith was considered great because she had so little on which to build. She lived in an area where the Lord Jesus had not been doing mighty deeds. Based on the amount of information she had, her faith was great. By contrast, when the Lord told the disciples that they had little faith, He was saying that it was little compared to all that they knew and had been exposed to.

Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God, this means you need to come to church & hear about Jesus. You need to read & study your Bible & learn about Jesus. Faith comes by hearing & reading the Word of God. The more you learn about Jesus, the greater your faith will be.

B. Faith Seeks the Right Object – What do you put your faith in? We can conclude that this mother was utterly unsatisfied with the pagan idols of her people. She may have been worshiping the Phoenician goddess Astarte alone or in concert with other gods, but those gods had not been able to solve her problems or meet her needs. I am sure that she went through the prescribed religious ceremonies to get Astarte’s attention, but she came up with nothing.

So having heard of Jesus, and having believed in the power of Jesus, she turned to Jesus. He became the object of her faith. In v.25 it says “she came and fell at His feet...” She believed in His power over Satan and over her own gods. The woman put her faith in the right person. You see, faith is only as good as the object of your faith. If you trust in yourself, you can only do what *you* are capable of doing. If you trust in the schools to help your child, they can only do so much. If you look to the government to start some new program, you will probably be disappointed. But if you trust in Jesus, you can tap into the power of omnipotence! Jesus is the One who can solve the problems we are facing today. Jesus is the answer to the problems you are facing in your family today.

So we must do the same as this mother. Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...” Let us put our faith in Jesus!

But some people say that they have faith, but they don’t express what they have faith in. They are like a guy jumping out of an airplane without a parachute and saying, “I belieeeeeeeve!” If you have a parachute, then you have something to believe in; if you don’t, then jumping into the void is not an act of faith; it’s an act of stupidity! For faith to be sensible, it has to have the right object. Wishful thinking is not faith. Great faith will always have a great object of faith. Are you putting your faith in Jesus to help you with the problems you are facing today?

C. True Faith Is Persistent - Jesus had seen plenty of shallow & empty faith. I believe that He wanted to test this woman’s faith. He wanted to demonstrate the great faith of the woman, so He put up barriers through which only genuine faith could persist. Notice the evidences that her faith was real because it was persistent:

1. She Kept Begging for Help from Jesus – In the last of v.26 we see that “she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.” Matthew’s account sheds light on one reason why she had to kept begging Jesus to cast out the demon. Matthew says concerning her first request, “But He answered her not a word...” You say, “That isn’t like Christ!” “Didn’t He care? Didn’t He have compassion?” Sure He did. But again, He was probably testing her faith. Many people would have given up & left. But true faith is persistent because she truly believed in the power of Jesus and she wasn’t going to give up easily. She would take no refusal.

2. She Sought Help Even though She Was a Gentile – Now because of her persistence, Jesus Himself put up another barrier to test her faith, and also to explain why He did not answer her at first. He said in v.27, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” Matthew states He also said to her, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24). In the plan of God it had been decided that

the blessings centering in the Messiah were to be offered first to “the children,” that is, to the Jews.<sup>4</sup> That was the rule, but she was a Gentile. Why should Christ help her? Any wholesale departure from this rule would amount to taking the children’s bread and tossing it to the little house dogs.<sup>5</sup> Surely, dogs—even pet dogs—cannot expect to be treated like children. The woman needs to know this, in order that she may understand that if her wish is going to be granted, it will be by way of exception, and certainly not something she is entitled to.

Now I must digress a bit and make an application. How many of you have a pet dog? How many more wish you had a pet dog? Well remember this: Jesus clearly says that human children are more important than dogs, even pet dogs. While we should not mistreat an animal, we should not put them on the same level as humans. Do you treat your dog better than you treat your husband, wife, or child? If so, you need to remember the words of Jesus in v.27!

I think Jesus was also telling the disciples, “I have not turned my back on Israel in spite of their hostility, bitterness, hatred, and murderous plots against Me. I’m still going to call Israel to repentance.” Indeed, He would later go back into Israel, and call them to believe and come into His kingdom.

The Lord’s comment in v.27 could have been taken as a slap in the face to the woman. But she didn’t say, “Just who do You think you Jews are? Do you think you are better than everyone else?” The pride of most people would have caused them to turn away at that point. But she already knew that there weren’t any other gods to turn to. There was no one else who could help her daughter. She had so much faith that Jesus’ comment didn’t deter her at all. After all, notice that Jesus had slightly opened the door. By saying in v.27, “Let the children eat all they want *first*,” at least He is telling this sorrow-filled woman that God did not completely lose sight of the Gentiles. That “first” distinctly says that the Jews were His priority at that time, but they did not have a monopoly on salvation & the blessings of God. If there is a “first,” there will follow a second. So the words of Jesus gave her the assurance that the meal-time for the dogs would come when the children were done. So she might well begin to reason: “If blessings are in store for the Gentiles tomorrow, why not today... even if it be by way of exception?” So she picked up on His analogy and took it a step further to fit her situation. She said in v.28, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.” She did not deny the special place of the “children” (Jews) in God’s plan, nor did she want to usurp it. All she wanted were a few crumbs of blessing from the table. So this barrier of her status as a Gentile couldn’t stop her either.<sup>6</sup> She was certainly persistent. So she turned the word of seeming reproach, “house dogs” into a reason for optimism, thereby transforming an impending defeat into a brilliant victory.

So when you face a problem, look to Jesus, and keep asking for His intervention until you receive the blessing you need from Him. Don’t give up. Be persistent in your faith. And when a loved one has a need, we should keep praying, and don’t quit, believing that in due time God will answer our prayers on their behalf. Don’t be like some people I’ve seen, who have faced trouble in

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Matt. 22:1-10; Acts 13:44-48; 18:6; Rom. 1:17.

<sup>5</sup> There are two words in the Greek language for dogs. One refers to the mangy, mongrel kind of dog that runs in packs and prowls through garbage. The other word refers to a little pet dog, and that’s the kind of dog Jesus is referring to here.

<sup>6</sup> All the time that Jesus was feeding the children of Israel, crumbs were dropping to the Gentiles. The Gospel accounts affirm that. Jesus said to the non-Jewish centurion, “Go home; as you believed, so let it be done for you.” Even the Old Testament tells of blessing & salvation being extended to the Gentiles. Jesus Himself said, “I tell you in truth, there were many widows in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months...? Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a widow (Luke 4:25-27). So not even during the old dispensation God’s special blessings were never absolutely limited to the Jews.

their lives or in their family, and they “try church” for a while. When things don’t quickly change, they give up and drop out of church. That’s not real faith. If you really believe Jesus can help you, or save your soul, you will keep seeking His help until deliverance comes!

Because of her faith, Jesus said in v.29, “For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.” Jesus gave her a promise that the demon had already been cast out of her daughter. As stated earlier, Matthew adds that Jesus said she had great faith. Then she revealed her faith in still another way:

D. Faith Acts Upon God’s Word – V.30 says, “And when she was come to her house...” She acted on her faith by going home, because she believed the promise of Jesus. She probably went home with great expectation, trusting that the promise of Jesus would be fulfilled. Had it not been for the fact that she believed that Jesus had healed her daughter; she would not have hurried home with such expectation.

If a woman born a Gentile put her little knowledge of the Lord to such good advantage, what is required of those who have received far greater privileges? Can Jesus describe your faith as great, or would He say that you have little faith? Do you turn to the Lord to meet all your needs, or do you depend on yourself or others? Is your faith persistent? Is your faith great? In what ways do you need to grow in your faith?

So we have seen the problem of this mother, the prayer of this mother, and the properties of her faith. Therefore, we now see:

#### IV. THE POWER OF THE SAVIOR

Even the demons of darkness cannot stand before the power of Jesus.

A. By Faith We Receive the Promise of Deliverance - In v.29 Jesus promised, “... the demon has gone out of your daughter.” The perfect tense of the verb “has gone out” shows the permanency of the cure.

B. By Faith We Experience the Power of Deliverance – She knows Jesus has supernatural power. She believed He had power over the supernatural kingdom of Satan and demons. So when she arrived home, she saw the result of the power of Christ. In v.30 we read, “And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.” Calmly the little one is resting now. There is peace on her brow and in her heart, for all is well. A sleeping child is a precious sight. The mother must have been overjoyed.

I believe that Jesus has the power to deliver today. He can deliver your child from the condemnation of sin. He died for their sins on the cross. So pray earnestly & persistently if you have a child who is not saved & following Jesus. He can also deliver your child from the power of alcohol or drugs. He can deliver your child from a rebellious spirit.

Of course, we have parents & others that have problems in their own lives. Perhaps you have some compulsive habit. You have made New Year’s resolutions to quit, and yet you can’t break free. Trust in Jesus; He can set you free.

Conclusion: There was a famous Bible teacher that you may know if I were to call his name. He was telling Dr. Jerry Vines about his teenage son. He was so rebellious that he & his wife had to put him in a home for rebellious children. Yet they did not give up on their son. They continued to

pray for their son each day. They sought the promises of God from the Word of God, and claimed those promises by faith. After some time their son repented of his sin & rebellion, & returned home in submission to his parents. Jesus answered their prayers!

It's great to hear success stories like that, but you still may be waiting for deliverance for your child, or for your situation. Keep looking unto Jesus. Keep praying. Don't give up. What Christ has done for others, He can certainly do for you!

I wonder if there are any children or young people here today who know that your parents are very burdened over you. Perhaps they are concerned that you are not yet a Christian. Perhaps they are concerned over some bad habits that have seized control over your life. Perhaps you no longer care about your grades in school. It's time that you care about your own life as much as your parents do. Put your faith in Jesus today. He can save you. He can deliver you. May God bring joy to your household, as he did for the household of the mother in our story!

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); John MacArthur, Jr., *Worshiping the Son of God: Study Notes on Matthew 13:53-16:12* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1985); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

Also see sermons & commentaries on Matt. 15:21-28.

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