

May 10, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Mothers' Day
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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A MOTHER'S FAITH

Matthew 15:21-28

We know that this day is set aside annually as a day in which we are supposed to honor mothers. What does that mean? How do we show honor to the institution and to the individuals who make up the institution? That's easy. How many of you have already been asked, or have asked someone, "What did you get for mother's day?" What did you get? Is honor all about getting? You bet! This is America!

Okay, so what is the most honoring gift we can give a mother? Or to state it in a way that a materialistic culture will understand, "What do you give to the mother who has everything?" Surely considerate children will seek to give mom the best they can. Or maybe not. Let's just be honest. Most of us will honor our mothers by getting them a little trinket or some token that simply says, "I'm thinking about you today."

Now just for the sake of wondering, what would you give to your mother if you could give her the greatest gift possible? A house in the Carribean? A new Ferrari? Naw! What would an 85 year old mother do with a Ferrari? How about a six-month-long around-the-world cruise?

What about the gift of faith? This gift is the best way possible to show honor to mother. By faith we do not mean simply the ability to believe stuff. We mean faith in Jesus Christ. But you might recoil, "My mother already has faith in Christ." That is wonderful if she does. So maybe we could desire for her faith to be increased.

The mother in our text reveals to us a very encouraging level of faith. She, of all people, had little reason to trust Jesus. In fact, Jesus tested her faith in order to allow her to prove that it was genuine. She passed the test with flying colors. Jesus said that her faith was great. We see in the story that the mother was caught in very difficult

circumstances. Circumstances like this require great faith. Actually, just being a mother requires great faith. How can a woman sense any responsibility for her children and not understand the phenomenal need for great faith in Jesus Christ? Great faith expects Jesus to answer pleas for help. Great faith trusts Jesus to forgive sins. We all need great faith.

Her Need was Obvious (vv.21-22).

The context of this narrative reveals a common scene in Jesus' ministry. He had spent some time arguing with the Pharisees and trying to persuade the people regarding truth. Then we read that Jesus withdrew from the Jews. *And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon (v.21)*. The fact that Jesus withdrew draws attention to the other fact that Jesus spent most of His time ministering among the Jewish people.

That reality fits with John's introduction of this Gospel in which he said that Jesus came to His own. In God's perfect design, wisdom, and sovereign control, the Messiah and Savior worked among the Jews first. God first revealed the seed truths about this plan when He chose Abraham, out of all the people in the world, to make a covenant with him (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham was not Jewish—God made him the first Jew. In that covenant, God promised to build an entire nation, yea, a race, out of Abraham's lineage (Gen. 15:5-6). God promised to give a particular piece of land to Abraham's people (Gen. 15:18-21).

It began with Abraham's son, Isaac, the promised heir. Then Abraham's grandson was named Jacob, which God changed to Israel. Israel had twelve sons who became the heads of the twelve tribes or families of the nation. God created the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai when He gave them His law after He had delivered them from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Jesus was born in David's city (Bethlehem) in the tribe of Judah. He was God in the flesh who came to earth to live perfectly under the law, to be killed on the cross, and rise from the dead in order to pay the price for sin and offer salvation to all who confess sin.

That is the good news that Jesus brought to the Jews first. To that end Jesus taught the woman of Samaria, "*You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the*

Jews” (John 4:22). He taught the disciples, “*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd*” (John 10:16). He told the two followers on the road to Emmaus, *that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Luke 24:47). And so His command to go into the entire world and preach the good news continues the wonderful truth that though salvation began with the Jews, it is intended for the entire world (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). It is as Paul confessed, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*” (Romans 1:16).

Jesus came to His own people, the Jews, but the Jews rejected Him. Quite early in His ministry, the teachers and Pharisees had already decided that He should be killed. The Sadducees (more political in thought than the Pharisees) came to the same conclusion. A few days before this event, thousands of people were ready to force Jesus to be their king (Matthew 14:13). And within twenty-four hours of their uprising, the same people abandoned Jesus because the cost for following that He laid down was too demanding (John 6:22-65). Even Herod the king of the region wanted to kill Jesus because he feared he was John the Baptist raised from the dead.

In that setting of pressure and hostility among the Jews, Jesus withdrew to a region that was predominantly Gentile. The crowds who wanted a Messiah/king would not be there to throng Him. Nor would the people who sought to kill Him be looking for Him in that region.

The picture reminds us that at various times in His ministry, Jesus needed to seek reprieve. Mark described the event with these words: *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). It was not that Jesus did not want to help people. Rather, though He was fully God, at the same time, He was fully human and experienced all the weaknesses we experience. We get tired and need to rest. That is what Jesus did. He went to the Gentile region near the city of Tyre to “hide away” for a bit.

But how can the presence of “God with us” be hidden? Jesus wasn’t hidden for long. A needy mother expressed her need. *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.22).

In spite of the fact that Jesus withdrew from ministry among the Jews, this meeting was not unexpected. It might have been unexpected by the disciples, but, in His omniscience, Jesus was not surprised that this woman found Him. In fact, this woman is why Jesus chose to go to the area around Tyre instead of going to Damascus or east across the Jordan or down to Egypt. Jesus had a divine appointment with a woman who would accept Him with open arms—quite unlike the Jews who rejected Him.

This Gentile woman’s confession of faith is worthy of our serious consideration. She acknowledged that Jesus is Lord. It is true that the word translated “Lord” can be used as a respectful address such as “Sir.” But in that here the word is connected with “Son of David,” the address “Lord” is used like it is commonly found in the Gospels as recognition that Jesus is Master. This is equivalent to this Gentile mother calling Jesus God.

Second, she acknowledged that Jesus is Messiah. “Son of David” is exclusively a title that acknowledges Jesus as the promised king in David’s line. Though she was a Gentile, she willingly admitted what many of the Jews refused to admit. She acknowledged that Jesus was doing God the Father’s works. Obviously, she had heard about the many miracles Jesus did in Galilee and Judea. If so, it was only fitting that she should conclude that He was the Christ sent from God. Jesus taught repeatedly that these miracles were the works God gave Him to do. The works of God testified that He was the Christ. The reason the mother came to Jesus is because she believed He was doing the Father’s work which would benefit her daughter.

To us, a Canaanite woman revealing this kind of faith is quite unexpected. That title or name *Canaanite* goes all the way back to Joshua’s day. The Canaanites lived in the land that God promised to give to His people the Israelites. Because they were so wicked, so thoroughly pagan and anti-God, God commanded Joshua and the people to annihilate them. God’s plan was to cleanse the land of those people. It is true that she was a mother who lived in Phoenicia, a mother who lived near Tyre, and could have been referred to in other ways. But God called her a Canaanite because it was also true that the

Jewish people would have seen her as a hopeless Gentile, an enemy of God.

We, too, have a tendency to assume that people who are not of our background, not of our experience, not of our particular religious stripe could not possibly trust Jesus. Why would people unlike us desire to come to Jesus and ask for help?

This undesirable Gentile woman came to Jesus and pled for help. She had a daughter with an incurable disease. The girl was demon possessed. This is not a surprising situation in Jesus' day where we see a lot of demonic activity. This was a real issue—not the errant conclusions of superstitious, uneducated people. Demons are not subject to mere people, because they are more powerful. As a result, this poor mother was forced to observe her daughter being ravaged by a wicked spiritual force that mom could not prevent. Surely she loved her daughter. Surely her heart broke for her. Surely she had accessed every resource known in her day. All to no avail.

Somewhere this Gentile had heard about Jesus and believed that He was who He said He was. What a contrast her faith is to the unbelief of the privileged people (Matthew 15:1-20). The Pharisees and scribes argued with Jesus about meaningless traditions (15:1-9). The religious people were all about outward religious activity while tolerating wickedness in their hearts. They didn't believe Jesus at all. This unacceptable woman believed Jesus; and because this mother believed Jesus, she came to Him weeping and begging for help.

Mothers like this are the kind of mothers Jesus will help. God's heart is touched by people who have come to the end of themselves and learned that there is no hope within themselves. These are people like David who was broken about his wicked sins. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:17).*

Her Test Increased (vv.23-24).

To some people in the house that day, it appeared that this woman was a nuisance (v.23). Jesus seemed to ignore the poor woman. She cried to Jesus for help, *but he did not answer her a word (v.23a)*. Jesus' response was very obvious to all. His response was to ignore the woman. Try to picture the scene. It was not like Jesus was walking along the road or sidewalk and refused to acknowledge this

crying woman. They were in a house. People were standing all around. Probably the house was packed. Now there was this woman standing in front of Jesus weeping uncontrollably begging Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

And somehow in that setting, Jesus refused to answer the mother. Did He look at her? Did He acknowledge her? Put yourself in the woman's sandals. Are you confused at Jesus' lack of response? Are you angry? Do you want to shake Him and force Him to answer you? Have you ever felt like that when you pray? Isn't Jesus supposed to be compassionate? No doubt the woman had heard all about the many people Jesus had healed and the demons He had cast out. Could she have heard how, *When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36)*? Where did that Jesus go?

This is like your co-worker hearing you sing, *Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul*. You sing, "O what a tender, compassionate Friend—He met the need of my heart." And they are wondering why God doesn't even answer their prayers. But do we know for sure that Jesus was ignoring the woman? Is it possible that He had a good, a superior reason for not answering? It is possible that Jesus did not respond at this moment **because** He is compassionate?

In contrast to Jesus, the disciples showed no compassion at all. *And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us" (v.23)*. They were just way too pragmatic. They, too, like this woman, believed that Jesus was the Son of David. But their conclusion was a political thing for them as they looked forward to sitting in the chief seats in the coming restored kingdom. The politically expedient thing would have been to meet her need and dismiss her because she was attracting the wrong kind of attention.

Jesus never does politically expedient things. Instead, the Lord tested the woman's faith still further. *He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v.24)*. It is true that He came first to the Jewish people. That was God's promise to Abraham. To that end, Jesus was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, and ministered to the Jews first. But it is also true that He helps those who call upon Him. Maybe this mother knew about the Samaritan woman to whom Jesus promised living water. Maybe she new about the Gentile centurion whose servant Jesus healed. Jesus commended that Gentile's faith as being stellar (Matthew 8:10).

Okay, then why wouldn't Jesus heal this Gentile woman's daughter? He was preparing her for faith. She already trusted the truth she knew about Jesus. But Jesus, having great love for this mother, desired for her to have great faith. Great faith is faith that has grown through trials.

Her faith triumphs (vv.25-28).

Finally this pleading mother expressed *great* faith. She worshiped the Lord. *But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me" (v.25).* See this woman being crushed and falling down in worship before Jesus. This is the evidence of great victory. Genuine worship of Jesus is the evidence of complete trust, full leaning on Him alone. Worship is the bowing of our hearts before our Lord. We acknowledge that we do not have the power or ability or wisdom to do what needs to be done. We show that we are leaning on Him wholly and only by bowing our hearts, our wills, our desires, our plans, and our purposes before Him.

Now the mother's words, "Lord help me," indicate that she has gained great faith. Oh, there is also another indication of this great faith. She responded well to continued testing. Jesus reminded her that it was not proper to give the children's food to dogs. *And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (v.26).* This was the expression of a simple principle that it is not right to give food that belongs to the children to the wandering, ravaging scavengers that this word "dog" would describe. Jesus meant, the good works God sent Him to do were intended for the Jews, not the Gentiles.

This was a serious test. Is it fair for God to do this? This is actually God's plan for those He loves. James wrote, *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).* God did this same kind of work of perfecting Abraham's faith for years. God matured David's faith the same way, so that David wrote, *"O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest" (Psalm 22:2).* Jesus intentionally tested Philip's faith so that he would go from "little faith" to "great

faith" (John 6:6). He put the faith of the disciples and Mary and Martha to the test in the death of Lazarus (John 11).

We will never learn complete dependance on Christ apart from having our faith tested. This faithful mother assured Jesus that she and her daughter were His pets. Pets are loved by their owner and dependant on their owner. *She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table" (v.27).* The same Greek word that speaks of old, mangy dogs is used to describe the beloved pets of the home. This woman knew that God loved her and that He would give her what she needed. This is faith—Great Faith.

Jesus rewarded the woman's faith. He met the need she expressed. *Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly" (v.28).* Of course the sovereign Lord knew this is where the conversation was going. He used the woman's desire as an opportunity to teach everyone the lesson of faith. Complete, full dependance on Jesus Christ is God's desire for us.

The story indicates Jesus met her greater need by grace through faith. The woman expressed deep, dependant faith in Jesus Christ her Lord and Messiah. Her testimony is like flashes of lightening on the horizon that tell of a coming downpour of refreshing rain for the Gentiles.

So, what is the best gift a mother can receive on Mother's Day? Great faith. We, along with God, desire that each person in this room today would have faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin. Having that faith, we desire that your faith would increase so that you would find it refreshing to bow before Jesus frequently, showing to Him your complete dependance on Him. The best gift a mother can receive on this special day is Great Faith.