

Jesus' Encounter with a Foreign Woman

Matthew 15:21-28 [Message Bible] *“From there Jesus took a trip to Tyre and Sidon, they had hardly arrived when a Canaanite woman came down from the hills and pleaded, “mercy, master, son of David! My daughter is cruelly afflicted by an evil spirit.” Jesus ignored her. The disciples came and complained, “Now she’s bothering us, would you please take care of her? She’s driving us crazy.” Jesus refused, telling them, “I’ve got my hands full dealing with the lost sheep of Israel.” Then the woman came back to Jesus, went to her knees and begged. “Master, help me.” He said, “It’s not right to take bread out of children’s mouths and throw it to the dogs.” She was quick: “You’re right, master, but better dogs do get scraps from the master’s table.” Jesus gave in, “Oh, woman, your faith is something else. What you want is what you get!” Right then her daughter became well.”*

There are tremendous implications in this passage of scripture.

This is the only recorded occasion on which Jesus during His ministry was ever outside Palestine and outside Jewish territory.

This passage foreshadows the going out of the gospel to the whole world, the beginning of the end of all barriers between Jews and Gentiles.

Jesus was coming to the end of His ministry and life.

He wanted to prepare the disciples for His death.

Christ went outside of Palestine where He could be sure of privacy from the crowds that followed Him.

No Jew would follow Jesus Christ into Gentile territory, so He was safe from the malignant hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees and dangerous popularity of the crowds.

This Canaanite woman must have somehow heard of the wonderful things Jesus had done for people in Palestine, and followed Him and His disciples crying desperately for help.

Jesus seemed to pay no attention to this Canaanite woman.

Why was this?

Jesus, limited to what one human being could do in a short ministry, had to limit His objectives like a wise general.

Jesus Christ had to begin with the Jews who had the background of the prophets who foretold of His coming and much of His teaching.

Here Jesus was confronted with a Gentile crying out for mercy.

There was only one thing that Jesus could do, He had to awaken true faith in the heart of this woman.

The New Covenant Jesus came to preach and ratify with His own blood was to be for Gentiles as well as Jews.

This New Covenant was dependent on faith, not outward obedience to a set of laws.

At last Jesus did respond to her persistent faith in Him, but insulted her by calling her a dog.

In those days dogs were unclean scavengers of the streets, lean, savage and often diseased.

The Jews in their arrogance of believing they were God's only chosen people, often called Gentiles dogs and later also called Christians dogs!

But remember the tone and the look with which a thing is said makes all the difference.

Even a hard remark can be made with a disarming smile.

We can be sure that the smile on Jesus' face and the compassion in His eyes robbed the words of insult and bitterness.

Also the word used was that of household pet dog **not** those that roamed the streets.

The woman had all the ready wit of her Greek background and was quick to see what Jesus was implying.

Jesus' eyes must have lit up with joy at such indomitable faith.

He granted her the blessing and healing she desired.

First and foremost she had love, she made the misery of her child her own.

Gentile she may be, without the knowledge of God that the Jews had, but her love was a reflection of the love God has for His children.

This Gentile woman had faith.

It was a faith that grew on contact with Jesus.

She began by calling Jesus "*the son of David*" a popular and political title, she ends by calling Him Lord.

Jesus as it were compelled her to look at Him, where she saw something that could only be expressed in terms of divine.

The request to a great respected man was turned into a prayer to the living God.

This faith that started by following but ended worshipping Jesus on her knees.

Whenever we approach Jesus we must first come with adoration of His divinity, and only then with the statement of our needs.

This Gentile woman had indomitable persistence.

Many people pray to God on the off-chance that what they request may possibly happen.

This woman came because Jesus **was not** just a possible helper, He was **her only hope.**

Prayer for her was **not** a ritual but an outpouring of passionate desire that could **not** take no for an answer.

This Gentile woman had the gift of cheerfulness.

She was in the midst of big trouble yet she could smile.

She had a certain "*sunny-heartedness*" about her.

Jesus shows that God loves the cheerful faith that can be a light in the gloom of trials.

Very often the faith of non-Christians can reflect the faith of this Gentile woman that put the faith of the Jews to shame.

Other incidents in the life of Jesus Christ reflect this response of faith from non-Jews.

Matthew 2:1-2 [NIV] *“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”*

The Magi who came to worship Jesus were Gentile.

Matthew 8:5-13 [NIV] *“When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralysed and in terrible suffering.” Jesus said to him, “I will go and heal him.” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour.”*

This same remarks could be applied to modern-day “Christians” who will miss out while non-professing Christians will be saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Matthew 22:1-14 [NIV] *“Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ “But they paid no attention and went off — one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. “But when the king came in to see the guests, **he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.** ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”*

The wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ clothing us.

This was directed to the Jews who were rejecting Jesus Christ and His message, and would eventually murder Him.

While Gentiles who were **not** given the special status of already knowing God, welcomed the invitation to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Also referring to the wedding feast of Christ and His bride the Christian church. [**Revelation 19:6-8**]

The professing Christians who should have been ready to respond at any time, clothed in righteousness, the credited righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Jesus limited His ministry to the Jews, those with a religious background.

Our commission is **not** limited as that of Jesus Christ was.

John 14:12 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”*

Many Christians [little Christs] will do far more than one human Christ could accomplish.

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**”*

Our commission is to many Gentile [non-religious] people in every era including the one in which we now live.

What are we doing about this, individually and collectively?