

# PLEADING FOR MERCY Sunday School- October 18, 2009

## Unifying Topic: **BEGGING TO GET IN**

### Lesson Text

I. Jesus Goes To Tyre (Mark 7:24)

II. A Mother's Request (Mark 7:25-26)

III. The Response Of Jesus (Mark 7:-27-30)

**The Main Thought:** The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. (Mark 7:26, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** We are sometimes astonished by the faith and tenacity that people exhibit. What motivates people to maintain such an attitude? The woman of Syrian Phoenicia believed that Jesus could heal her daughter, so she persisted despite Jesus' challenging questions.

**Lesson Aim:** To help students understand the persistent powerful faith of the Syrophenician woman.

**Life aim:** To teach how we can come to Jesus by faith, trusting Him to hear our plea and solve our problems. Even though the help does not always come immediately, we must continue to believe in Christ.

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- 7:24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.
- 7:25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:
- 7:26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.
- 7:27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.
- 7:28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.
- 7:29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.
- 7:30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

### **HISTORY:**

Jesus and his disciples had just crossed over and entered the land of Gennesaret by ship and the people literally ran about the whole region carrying beds of the sick to Jesus even begging to touch just the border of His garment. Can you see the desperation of the people trying to get to The Healer? As they came, many touched and were made whole!

Now in **Mark 7:1-23** come an official delegation of theological Pharisees and certain scribes from Jerusalem to visit the Lord Jesus. They didn't come to welcome Him but they were alarmed at the tremendous popularity of Jesus and they came to trap Him. They had already accused Him of healing and casting out demons by Beelzebub (Chapter 3). They had also accused Him of breaking the Sabbath law (Chapter 3). And here we go again, verse 2, "*they saw some of his disciples eating bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen,\* hands, they found fault*".

### **NOTE:**

\* In Exodus Chapter 30 the priests were required to wash ritually. But for 200 years this was taken from Exodus 30 and practiced by all pious Jews. So before any meals Jews would pour just a little bit of water on their hands, and they would elevate their hands slightly so that the water would run down to the wrist, and eventually down to their elbows, and then they would rub their hands together. Next they would lower their hands, and rinse them, allowing the water to drop off their fingertips - now that was only for meals. Also, the assumption is believed that they actually bathed themselves from head to toe ceremonially, when they came from the market, to be clean. This extended to various eating utensils in which they also washed ceremonially: pots and pans would be dipped - ceremonial baptisms that were used in order to make the user of these utensils ceremonially pure. So this was their rule, the Jewish tradition of the elders: unless you washed to your elbows, you were ceremonially defiled. The belief was that you could transfer this ceremonial uncleanness to others, and even to holy things.

So these religious Jews asked the Lord Jesus, questioning Him in verse 5: "*Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?*" (NIV). They were questioning Jesus not on the grounds of scripture, but on the grounds of their own man-made traditions. This washing had nothing to do with cleaning the hands. It was a ceremonial cleansing.

So Jesus begins to explain what defiles a man. He said, "*You're hypocrites*", and the word for 'hypocrite', \* of

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course, is derived from a Greek word that described an actor wearing a mask while he was on the stage. So really the Lord was saying: *You are religious play actors.* Your conformity, your traditional values\*\* of outside show is not changing you within.

#### NOTE:

\*A hypocrite gives lip service while keeping his heart far from God. He acknowledges God and attends worship, but this is about all he does. They study the scripture, pray, witness, help the needy, and keep the rules. They would even fight to maintain religious tradition. Yet, their heart is not God's. They do not know God personally, not in the depths of their heart. They are deceived.

#### POINT:

*What the Lord was really saying is that there is a deceitfulness with religion, and indeed any other institution of humankind that tries to effect a change on the inside by changing the outside. You are deceiving others, you're making out by your outward conformity that you're something you're not on the inside - but not only are you deceiving those around you, you're deceiving yourself, thinking that you're better than others because of your conformity without (by the outside).*

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#### NOTE:

\*\*The problem with their rules, they were not from God, they were "the traditions of the elders". In an effort to protect the Law from people, the ancient Jews added to that Law. They added restrictions that went beyond the letter of the Law. The Jewish leaders believed that their traditions helped people keep the Law better; they believed their traditions protected the Law from the people. The problem with man's rules is just that, they are man's rules and not the Lord's, and came to supersede God. These little rules that were man-made and added on to God's first five books of the Bible were perceived as acquiring equal authority to God's Word itself.

#### POINT:

*The strange thing with religion, and any human man-made institution, people often willingly accept rigidity and ritual as a substitute for reality. If on a Sabbath day you saw a grey hair, you weren't allowed to pull it because that was work. Therefore, to guard against the temptation of pulling a grey hair, they made the rule, not to look into a mirror. You also weren't allowed to wear false teeth on the Sabbath day and so on.*

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#### TERM:

**TRADITION** :The Greek word is **paradosis**, which means "giving over" or "handing down." It refers to teaching that is handed down either by word (orally) or in writing.

He quoted from scripture, applying Isaiah's words to their spiritual condition (Is.29:13).

#### POINT:

*The precept, "honor thy father and thy mother", which included 'honoring' by financial support, is among the Ten Commandments (Ex.20:12). It became customary for supposedly pious Jews to claim that their funds were already designated as a gift to God, when they were confronted with their parents' need. More than that, a Pharisee could impose a certain amount upon a layman, and if he replied, "But I am obligated to help my mother and father!" he could insist, 'You are freed from this commandment, because that money is Corban (Greek translation of Hebrew qurban, meaning a gift for God); it is a God-appointed gift for his service.*

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Jesus goes on to stress an importance point to saying to the people, (v15) "*Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean' (NIV).*

#### POINT:

*What defiles a man is not what he eats and drinks. What a man eats and drinks does not enter his heart. It enters his digestive tract and passes through his body. Therefore, food and drink, or eating with unwashed hands, or doing any other outward thing cannot defile a man— not spiritually. The thing that comes out of the heart of man is what defiles him. What Jesus is saying is the heart defiles a man — a corrupt heart, therefore he corrupts himself.*

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*"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man"(v21-23). Explanations of all these at another time. However I have to throw*

this in. Man makes **three fatal mistakes** when dealing with the problem\* of the law and evil, that is with the problem of his heart.

1. Man judges evil to be external only. He judges only the sinful act, only the deed. In the eyes of society, a man would be considered perfect if he never did bad; never broke the law, and never did the forbidden thing. A person is considered good if he seldom does bad; seldom breaks the law, and seldom does the forbidden things (ex.: breaking the speed limit or taking a pencil from the office; I'm saved because I'm a good person).
2. Man fails to see (or confess) that evil arises from the heart, from within. He does not consider that evil things are done from an evil heart. Therefore, man puts little if any restraint upon the lust and inward thought. Man seldom thinks beyond the act; he seldom digs into the reason for the lust and the thought; he seldom gives any attention to the heart. The result; man still grapples and always will have to grapple with the problem and tragedy of evil.
3. Man fails to see and acknowledge that the human heart needs to be changed, that is, converted by the Son of God. He refuses to face up to the fact that is so clearly seen: a new man is what is needed. Somehow man's heart needs to be reborn by the Power of the Holy Spirit.

#### NOTE:

\*Jesus revealed the problem so clearly. There is a **progression of sin** within a man. **1)** It begins in human nature – within, out of the heart. **2)** It develops in the human mind – in evil thoughts. **3)** It is expressed in human acts – adulteries, fornications...

### Mark 7:24: Jesus Goes To Tyre

Jesus needed rest,\* quiet time after rebuking the Pharisees and scribes, to prepare both for Himself and His disciples. The only place he could find freedom from the crowds and from His opponents was in the northern area bordering Gentile territory of Tyre. No Jew was likely to enter Gentile areas. *"He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it: yet he could not keep his presence secret"* NIV.

#### POINT:

*There is a time to labor and there is a time to seek rest and God's presence. These are essential if we are to serve in the Power of God.*

#### TERM:

**TYRE and SYDON** :were two port cities along the Mediterranean Sea northwest of Galilee. Tyre was the capitol of Phoenicia.

He could not be hid;

- At His Birth He could not be Hid!
- At His Presentation He could not be Hid!
- At His Baptism He could not be Hid!
- In His Earthly Ministry He could not be Hid!
- At His Crucifixion He could not be Hid!
- At His Burial He could not be Hid!

#### THREE OTHER THINGS FROM SCRIPTURE:

1. **Jer.29:13:** He cannot be Hid from those that Seek Him.
2. **Acts 4:13:** he could not be Hid in those that Find Him.
3. **Rev.1:7:** He could not be Hid from those Who Reject Him.

#### POINT:

*He isn't hiding, He is waiting with open arms to receive us and all our baggage. If we need Him, we can find Him!*

### Mark 7:25-26: A Mother's Request

In caring for the rejected you have to allow for interruptions by the rejected. *"For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet"* The woman had **two strikes against her**. *First*, she had a daughter with an unclean spirit. In the ancient world when a family member had an evil spirit, the whole family was shunned, sometimes feared and ostracized. *Second*, the mother was a Greek, a Syrophenician or Canaanite by race. They and the Jews were bitter enemies, ancestral enemies; despised and hated each other. In approaching Jesus, she knew that she was coming to a Jew who was assumed to be her enemy. But note a significant fact: Jesus let her come. He didn't stop her. Others rejected her and her daughter and had nothing to do with them. But she came and begged, pleaded for his mercy for her demon-possessed

daughter. It says, "*She besought\** (begs, pleads with) Him (Jesus) that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter"

#### NOTE:

\*Besought is in the Greek imperfect tense, which means she kept on begging and begging. In **Matthew 15:22** it says, she said, "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David*". She truly loved her daughter that she considered her daughter's problem her own. It was true oneness, a union she felt. And she approached the right person, Jesus Himself! And cried out for mercy!

#### POINT:

*She had apparently heard that the Jews expected a Messiah, a son of the great King David who was to work miracles for them: her limited concept. And she heard about Jesus, that He was delivering people from their sicknesses and healing them: she seeing Jesus only as a miracle worker and healer.*

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### Mark 7:-27-30: The Response Of Jesus

In caring for the rejected you have to converse with them. Jesus answers, "*First let the children eat all they want...for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs*" NIV (indicating that His ministry is first to his own people). The woman came in utter sincerity and with great respect. She replies "*Yes, Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's (Jewish) crumbs*" (that would be sufficient for me). He knows her heart and He leads her step by step to understand His Lordship and to confess her faith in a humble and worshipful spirit.

#### TERM:

**DOGS:** was usually a symbol of dishonor. Calling people dogs in the day of Jesus was a common practice. This was not referring to a dog in the streets. However, Jesus used this to stir and test her sincerity and persistence.

#### POINT:

*His words might have seemed hard. But He listens, knowing her heart. In other words Jesus may have turned this incident into a living parable to show his disciples how hardened they were in their attitudes against Gentiles. This was a cross-cultural awareness. Perhaps he wanted to illustrate in a way they would never forget that despite rejection, Gentiles like the woman deeply hungered for God's grace and power.*

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In caring for the rejected you have to meet their needs. Jesus commends her faith and responds by healing her daughter. Her daughter was not with her, it says, "*She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone*" (v30) NIV. Her belief was so strong she would not quit despite being met with, irritation, opposition, apparent rebuff, and being told that she was undeserving.

#### SUMMARY:

Most people today are trying to get one or more major needs in their lives met. Some people are looking at devastating family problems, at financial difficulty, or a problem with a child. Some see their own souls and realize that they are lost. Some are looking at a disease and wondering what lies ahead. And again, some are looking at their parents and realizing they won't be here forever. The question is, 'How are you going about it'?

After laboring, there is a time to seek rest. Jesus had been available for the people, healing and delivering them from unclean spirits; He dealt with the Pharisees and scribes of the Law and their traditions, and rebuking and explaining the truth of what defiles a man. Now it called for needful rest, for He and His disciples. After getting out of the ship, Jesus is interrupted.

This was a heavy burden this Gentile woman carried: having a young daughter with an unclean spirit, she a Greek, of another race coming to a Jew who was thought to be her enemy.

How many experience their children living under the influence of Satan, in a different sense, perhaps, but nevertheless living in the sin and shame of the devil? How many loved ones would have their needs met if we took time and continued to intercede for loved ones as this woman did for her daughter? However, **we** have a greater promise. We don't have to beg God. We have the promise and power of God within us to rebuke the enemy and declare wholeness.

A lot of people would give up, but not this woman! She persisted in spite of everything that was thrown into her pathway. Why? She persisted because too much was at stake! Her little daughter needed to be delivered from her bondage. Her family needed to be saved. She needed help and she was determined to get it! A crumb might have

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been all she could get; but she knew that a crumb from His hand was more than enough! She wouldn't give up until she got what she needed! His response to her was not rejection. It was merely a statement of fact. But why? The woman needed to learn persistence, humility, and trust. And the woman needed to learn that there was only one true religion and one true Messiah. She called Him Lord, but **now she truly worships Him as Lord**. Here was a Gentile dog that had more faith than the Jewish scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and priests. This kind of faith excites the Lord! Pride will defeat the purpose of Mercy. She pleaded for mercy and **received** mercy from the Lord.

#### **APPLICATION:**

Prayers heard from on High will often bring down blessings. Never, never let us forget that the children for whom many prayers have been offered, seldom perish when sincerely given to God. Let us continue to pray more for our sons and daughters, even when they will not let us speak to them about religion. They cannot prevent us speaking of them to a Holy God. Our hearts are apt to become cool and indifferent, and to think that it is of no use to draw near to God. However, persevere in praying for others. Study the case of this woman, how she had prayed, pleaded her case, and did not faint in the face of great discouragement. Let us name all those we love and place them before the throne of a loving God continually. Let us pray for all--the worst, the hardest, and the most unbelieving. How bad do you want to touch God and for Him to touch you? The answer may not come for ten, fifteen, or twenty years. It may not come until we have exchanged prayer for praise, and are far away from this world. But while we live, let us pray!