

Guest Preacher - Rev. Iain Thompson

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Preacher: Rev. Iain Thompson

[0:00] If we can turn back to the chapter that we read together in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 15. And we want to consider the incident that's recorded for us in verses 21 through to 28 concerning the Canaanite woman.

Now, this story didn't look very promising to begin with. But ended up very encouraging. She called out to Jesus to have mercy on her.

And she addresses him with great respect. And whether she understood it or not, she also addressed him in great faith.

And that's what we want to consider this morning. The faith of this Canaanite woman. The first thing I want to consider is that Jesus appears to be very discouraging towards her.

We're told that when she appealed to him that he didn't answer her a word.

[1:26] She had a legitimate reason for her to be calling on him because her daughter had a demon. And she had obviously heard that he had healed other people who were afflicted with this.

And she comes to appeal to him to have mercy on her and on her daughter. Now, he acted as if he didn't hear her.

Yet he didn't tell her to go away. There was no word of encouragement from him. But there was also no word to discourage her.

Because this is what we all have to understand. That silence from God doesn't automatically mean that God is not hearing our prayers.

And the woman, although she wasn't encouraged, she understood that he wasn't discouraging her either.

[2:34] Now, the disciples obviously saw this woman as a great nuisance.

And they asked Jesus to send her away. But he did not send her away.

She continued to cry out after him. And he then answered her, I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Now, it's important for us to note here that Jesus seems adamant in his refusal to help this woman. But also to note that he did not grant his disciples petition to send her away.

But he continued to entertain this woman. He refused to give heed to his disciples.

[3:52] But he speaks to this woman. Now, there's a lesson here for us. And the lesson is that maybe the lesson wasn't for the woman that he was teaching.

The lesson was for the disciples themselves. And although the words that he spoke to her might seem very harsh, at least he's continuing to deal with her.

He broke his silence and is now talking to her. But he completely rejected the desire of the disciples.

But he doesn't reject the woman. He continues to speak to her. And he will continue to speak to her. And that's the second thing that we want to consider.

Her perseverance in prayer. She came and knelt before him saying, Lord, help me. One of the reasons for this woman's success in securing God's blessing is that she wasn't going to listen to the disciples.

[5:08] She wasn't going to listen to what they were telling her and what they were telling Jesus to tell her, send this woman away. No, it appears that it made her more determined in her desire that he is going to listen to me and he will give me the blessing that I desire.

Because her determination was obviously driven by the love and by the concern that she had for her daughter.

And in a sense, she's identifying with her daughter. What her daughter was going through was affecting her. As if she herself was going through it with her.

And that's the kind of thing that makes our prayers effectual. To immerse ourselves in what we're desiring for other people.

To have compassion upon them. To enter into their position. And that's exactly what Jesus does for his people.

[6:21] That's the accusation that he brought before Paul when he was persecuting the church. Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting me? He's identifying with his people.

And what his people were going through, he was going through. And he also said, if you give a drop of water to the least of these my people, you're giving it to me.

So he's hurt when his people are hurt. And he's comforted when his people are comforted. And that's the kind of spirit that this woman had.

She was identifying with her daughter. She was being hurt because her daughter was being hurt. She put herself into her daughter's shoes because she loved her.

Now we claim to love our children. We claim to love those that are yet unsaved. Do we put ourselves into their shoes?

[7:22] Do we imagine what's awaiting for them at the end of time if they continue to go without receiving the blessings of Jesus?

And if we identified more with them, if we had real compassion for them, we would have the same determination that this woman has in refusing to let the Lord go until he blesses her.

This is similar to what Jacob had in Peniel. I will not let you go until you bless me. And that prayer changed Jacob into Israel.

And maybe that's what Jesus was trying to teach this woman when he said to her, I am only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel so that she may come afterwards to realize she was one of these people.

Because the true children of Abraham are not those who are natural descendants of Abraham, not the Jewish people.

[8:37] The descendants of Abraham, as far as the Lord is concerned, is those who have the same faith as Abraham had.

And this woman had that faith. So she was one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Just as Jacob became Israel through his prayer, this woman was a spiritual Israelite.

And the third thing that I want to consider is that he tried her faith. And we could ask the question, why did Jesus delay in giving this woman what she needed so desperately?

Well, the answer is quite simple. He was trying her faith. And this woman is not unique in that respect because we have numerous instances in the Bible where the Lord appears to be deaf and not hearing the prayers of his people.

This is very often the complaint of the psalmist. Why? Why are you not hearing me? Why are you not answering me? Jesus was testing this woman's faith.

[10:08] We read in the Gospels that he sometimes delays on his way to Jairus' house to heal his daughter.

He got held up. He got delayed. Somebody came to tell him, it's too late. Your daughter is dead. But Jesus encouraged Jairus, don't be concerned. Just continue to believe. And he continued on his journey and he healed his daughter.

We're told when he fed the thousands in the wilderness that he had asked Philip, where can we get bread to feed this many people?

And he knew what he was going to do. But we're told in the Gospel of John, he did this to test Philip's faith.

[11:13] Do you see, if Philip believed that Jesus was able to feed the thousands that were there in the wilderness. We learn the same lesson concerning Lazarus.

When he heard that Lazarus was sick, he didn't rush off to heal Lazarus. No, he delayed for two days. And it was only when he heard that Lazarus had died that he then went to Lazarus' home. Why was that? Well, to heal a dead Lazarus or to raise a dead Lazarus was going to be far more glorious than to heal a sick Lazarus.

And that was to encourage and strengthen the faith of his two sisters and those who had gathered with them. He could have gone immediately and healed them.

But he delayed. He was testing their faith. faith. And it became evident that they had faith.

[12:27] They had faith in the resurrection. And he demonstrated that their faith was not in vain when he rose Lazarus from the dead.

and the reason that the Lord sometimes delays answering the prayers of his people is that our faith may be purified as silver is refined.

And he exercises our faith in order that our faith might grow. because faith is like a muscle.

If you don't exercise it it will not grow. And this woman's faith was going to be exercised not because he didn't want to bless her but because he wanted her to grow in the faith that she evidently had.

He wanted to strengthen it by means of the very answer that he had given her. Where we read in verse 24 I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[13:41] And in verse 26 it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. She was being tested to see just what her faith would lay hold of.

And once he saw that her faith was laying hold of the testings or the trials that he was putting upon it her daughter was healed because she demonstrated that she had faith and he wanted to encourage that faith.

her faith shone through. And that's the last thing that we want to consider. Strong faith is always characterized by humility.

the Lord had said to her it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. Now many people would have been insulted by that but she was not insulted.

She doesn't resent the fact that he's comparing her to a dog because the word that's used is a word that's used for a household dog.

[15:09] A pet, a family pet. He's not referring to her as a wild dog but as a household dog. And she accepts that inferior position.

And she turns what would appear to be a reproach to her into a reason for great optimism. It's as if she said to herself, am I being compared to the family household dog, the family pet?

Well, I rejoice in that because good masters look after their pets. Good masters feed their dogs.

They don't feed wild dogs but they feed their own dogs because they will not allow their own dogs to starve if they are good masters.

They permit them to eat the scraps that come from their own table. And as a result of her humiliation, she was then exalted.

[16:26] And she received the blessing that she was seeking. and the scriptures teach us that. If we humble ourselves, we will be exalted not immediately, but in due time.

That's exactly what's happening here. He didn't give her the blessing right away, but he gave it to her in due time. Once he had tested her faith, and once her faith came through shining, and he then commends it, and he says to her, woman, great is your faith.

Be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was healed instantly. Divine love is so infinitely wonderful that it even praises the gift that God himself has given to us to exercise.

He's given this woman the gift of faith, something that he himself has freely given to her. We're saved by grace.

We're saved by the grace of faith, faith. And Paul tells us, that's not of yourselves, it's the gift of God.

[18:02] So this woman's faith was something that Jesus himself had given, but something that she made use of. She exercised that faith.

She had worked out in her life that which God had worked in her. Because she had obviously received the word of God at some time.

And she had understood and laid hold of the fact that the Messiah was going to be the Savior of sinners. One who would make it possible for God to be reconciled to us and give us the blessings that we so desperately need.

And the reason that we can be convinced of that is the way that she had dressed him at the outset. Outset. Where she said to him, have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.

This is a Canaanite woman. She wasn't a Jew. Many of the Jews hadn't latched on to the fact that the Savior was going to come from the seed of David.

[19:22] This woman had. She had that faith and she obviously understood through the healing that she had heard of and the teaching that he was giving, this is the Messiah.

This is the one who can help me. This is the one who can bless my daughter. I'm not going to let this person go. I'm going to exercise the promises that he himself has given. I'm going to put my faith in them. I'm going to address him as the son of David because this is what the word of God had prophesied. So she was working out through the exercise of her faith what God had worked in.

And that's what's required of all who have saving faith. That we make use of what we have heard. Because faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. But faith without works is dead. It doesn't matter how much you've heard of the word of God.

[20 : 38] Unless you exercise it, it is dead. It's not going to go any further than that. You won't have any greater blessing than the people that never heard the word of God.

And some people who only hear a small portion of God's word make use of it. They exercise it and they make use of it to lay hold of God.

They put their faith and confidence in the fact that God is willing to save sinners. God is going to be so beautifully expressed in this woman's experience.

She had heard that the Messiah would come from the seed of David. And she demonstrated that in the way that she addressed him at the outset.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. David, my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. So she made use of the knowledge that she had accumulated.

[21 : 48] And she may not have accumulated much knowledge because she was a Canaanite. She wasn't a Jew. It was to the Jews that the word of God was given.

But obviously others heard of it. And we see at the time of Jesus in this world that it wasn't just the Jews.

In fact, many of the Jews rejected him, whereas some of the Gentiles came to him. And the ones that did come to him of the Gentiles were demonstrating greater faith than some of the Jews did. They were making use of the word of God, which they heard. And that's what's required of every one of us. But if we don't make use of it, supposing we learn the Bible off by heart, it's not going to do us any good.

Supposing we attend church every Sunday, it's not going to do us any good, unless we're putting into practice what the word of God teaches us, and we allow it to shape our lives and to conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 09] This woman recognized herself as somebody who didn't deserve the blessings of the children, but who recognized that even the dogs under the master's table were blessed.

blessed. She saw herself in that position. She humbled herself. She knew that she didn't deserve to receive the blessings, but she believed that this was the good master, that this was the one who wanted to bless sinners, that this was the savior of sinners.

So she humbled herself and she exercised the faith that she had in the one that would come to bless sinners. And she recognized her own need of help, not just for herself, but for her daughter. And she received the blessing that she desired. And that challenges all of us, especially those of us who have a good grasp of what's contained within the Bible, because we've heard it all our lives. What are we doing with it? What are we doing with the word of God? Are we seeking to allow it to sanctify us, to influence our lives in the way that we conduct ourselves so that the temple that we have, this body, will become a temple where prayer is made?

[24 : 55] Do we pray? Do we pray using God's word, claiming the promises of God's word, reminding God of what he has promised to give those who seek him through faith?

Are we exercising that faith that he's given to us as a free gift? Are we making use of the privileges? Because if not, then we're no better off than those who never heard the gospel.

And our destiny will be exactly the same as theirs, a lost eternity. But Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost, so that we will not spend eternity lost, but that we may be found and that we may receive the salvation which he continually offers us in his word, every time that we hear it. It's not for his benefit that we come to church, it's for ours. He knows what's contained in his word. He has all the blessings at his disposal.

He doesn't need any of the things that we desire. He is all sufficient, but we don't have these things, to give us.

[26 : 28] And he's willing to give it to us if we will but exercise faith and the determination that we will not let him go until he fulfills his promise to us.

Because if he doesn't fulfill his promises after we've diligently pled them, it won't be us that will lose our reputation, it will be him.

Because he has promised that if we knock, it will be open to us. If we ask, we will receive. If we seek, we will find.

Let's hold him to his promises. And let's diligently refuse to be put off by voices within our own heads and voices from without who will seek to discourage us from coming to Jesus and following Jesus.

Let us be faithful to him and let us commit our confidence to him. May the Lord bless to us these thoughts. Let us pray.

[27:41] Our Father in heaven, we give you thanks for the instances that have been recorded for us in your word where faith has been demonstrated by those who sought to exercise that faith to lay hold of you so that they might receive your blessing.

Lord, let us never be content to be going away from the means of grace unless we believe that we have met with you and that we are determined to receive your blessing because you have promised to give it.

It's not that you're unable to give it. It's not that you're unwilling to give it. If there is any inability or any unwillingness, it's on our part and never on your part.

So help us, O Lord, that we would see that through Jesus it's possible for us to do all things. And through Jesus that we can receive the blessings that we so desperately need for ourselves and for our fellow human beings, lead us and go before us to lay hold of them and have mercy upon us for our sins and shortcomings.

For we ask it in Jesus precious name. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 27 on page 237 in the Scotty Psalter.

[29:17] Page 237 And we're going to sing from verse 9. Far from me, hide not thou thy face, put not away from thee thy servant in thy wrath thou hast and helper been to me.

O God of my salvation, leave me not nor forsake. Though me, my parents both should leave, the Lord will me uptake. Down to the end of the Psalm, Psalm 27 at verse 9.

Far from me, hide not thou thy face, put not away from thee. Far from me, hide not thou thy face, away may may Thy seven days I rather was, and help permeate me.

O God of my salvation, leave me not dark for sin.

Though me my parents both should leave, the Lord will be out there.

[31:13] O Lord, let's guide me in thy way.

To be a leader, be in a plain path because of those that each prepared to be.

Give me no two, my enemy's will.

For witness is the blind against me, risen are us such.

As great thou cruelty. I fainted heart, unless I die.

[32:42] Believe it hard to see. The Lord's all goodness in the land.

For death, O Lord, let us know. Wait on the Lord, and lead us strong, and Jesus' death afford.

And to thine heart, yea, do thou wait.

I say upon the Lord. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen.