

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#15: Mark 7:24-37: Jesus the Savior

Intro: The Island of Misfit Toys

I. Jesus Saves Unlikely People

A. Gentiles

- These two stories take place in Gentile regions
 - The region of Tyre and Sidon (v.24), is way north of Galilee
 - The region of Decapolis (v.31), is on the East side of the Jordan
 - The woman is called a "Gentile" (v.26), and likely the man was too (v.31-32)
- Jesus appears to be intentionally enacting the Gentile Mission
 - He just declared "all foods clean" in prior story (7:19)
 - He seems to go intentionally into these areas: "he arose and went away" (v.24)
 - Remember, God had always planned that the Gospel go to the whole world:
 - Promises to Abraham were to bless "all nations" (Gen 12:1-3)
 - Jesus' birth is described as a "light to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32)
 - Great Commission calls the Gospel to go to "all nations" (Matt 28:19)

B. Enemies

- The woman is also called a "Syrophoenician" (v.26)
 - This region, called Phoenicia by the Greeks, was pagan, idolatrous and a historical enemy of Israel
 - Jewish historian Josephus refers to these people as Israel's "bitterest enemies"
 - Jezebel, who hated and tried to murder Elijah, was from this region (1 Kings 19:1-8)
- Sometimes the people we think will be saved are not, and the people we never think will be saved are
 - Pharisees should have believed but didn't, but a Syrophoenician woman never should have but did
 - **Don't assume people are Christians, and don't give up on those who are not!
- Can you think of other "enemies" that God saved in the Bible?

C. Socially Marginalized

- Women were not treated well in the ancient world
 - The Greco-Roman world was hostile to women in many ways
 - Even in first-century Judaism, women lacked protections and social status
- But, Jesus speaks to, and eventually helps this woman
 - Jesus' ministry valued women and included them
 - "The twelve were with him and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means" (Luke 8:2-3)
 - Paul's ministry valued women and included them (Romans 16)

Big Point: The Good News of Jesus is for Every Kind of Person!

II. Jesus Rewards Those People Who Seek Him

A. At First, Jesus is Not Responsive (v.27)

- Jesus points out that his priority is the “children” of Israel
 - This doesn’t mean people are saved by being ethnic Jews, nor does it mean that God doesn’t want Gentiles
 - Instead it is a statement of redemptive-historical priority: “To the Jew first, and then also the Greek” (Rom 1:16)
- But Isn’t Jesus kind of mean?
 - One wonders whether Jesus was testing this woman (or trying to persuade the disciples!), or perhaps he was waiting to see if she was another “Jezebel” from Tyre and Sidon
 - “dog” is a term historically used for Gentiles—but Jesus uses it here to give an analogy for how Gentiles can participate in the Jewish “family meal”
- How do you handle it when God seems to ignore your pleas?

B. The woman showed amazing faith and perseverance (v.28)

- She wouldn’t take “no” for an answer—she was not discouraged by Jesus’ “resistance”
- She is like Jacob who “wrestled” God and insisted on being blessed (Gen 32)
- She is like the persistent widow who kept asking (Luke 18:1-8)

C. Key point: God rewards those who seek and ask!

III. Jesus Makes Us New People

A. Jesus Is Compassionate on the Brokenness Caused by Sin

- Notice that Jesus “sighed” before healing the man (v.34)
- He feels the weight of peoples’ brokenness and pain

B. Jesus’ Miracles Are Also a Spiritual Sign

- Without his help, we cannot “hear” spiritually
- Without his help, we cannot “speak” spiritually
- This entire story has a theme of *recreation*
 - He healed by speaking, just like he created by speaking
 - His spittle was symbolic of the Spirit, like the Spirit at creation
 - “he has done all things well” (v.37), is an echo of Genesis: “And God saw that it was good”

Discussion Groups

1. How does this theme of Jesus reaching the unexpected and the outcast encourage or challenge you today? In what ways can your approach to ministry look different as a result?
2. How does Jesus’ interaction with women give you encouragement today? In what ways can this change or affect our ministries?
3. Share one thing that you’ve stopped asking God for since he hasn’t seemed to answer your prayer. How does this passage help you to keep seeking him?