

**Matt 15.21-31 – Great faith in a great Saviour**

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Main point – With your needs put your trust in the great Saviour Jesus

Sometimes I've spoken with people who've gone through great trials or suffering, and they're struggling to keep their faith in God.

Maybe you know what that's like?-----

You suffer and pray and ask God to help you; (**SLIDE**) or heal you; or your loved one; or you ask God to change your difficult circumstances, and he doesn't.

And when you pray and pray, and nothing changes, the suffering goes on, we can be tempted to give up.

Give up praying, give up trusting, give up believing.-----

Maybe you know that?----- Or you know others who have?-----

And maybe you think, after all I've done for God, I deserve this?-----

Or maybe you think after all my sins, I don't deserve this; and won't receive it?-----

Maybe you're feeling God is so far away from you?-----

How do we find the strength and will to keep coming to God and keep trusting in him with our needs?-----

That's what we're thinking about today.-----

It's important to remember what we looked at last week as we come to this passage.

(**SLIDE**) Remember that Pharisees had come to Jesus and said, your disciples don't ceremonially wash their hands before they eat.

They were implying, Jesus and his disciples were unclean n' unacceptable to God.

But Jesus came back at them and said, no, you've disobeyed God's commands, and you're unclean before God.-----

And we saw how it's the sinful words & actions that come from our defiled hearts, that make us unclean before God.-----

And only Jesus by his sinless life, and sacrifice, can clean and forgive us.-----

And now we meet someone who was viewed by the Jews, as unclean.

We meet someone thought to be a great distance from God.

**Great Distance is my first of 3 points.(SLIDE)-----**

Again, understanding the historical background is important here.

In **Genesis 15** God promised Abraham that his descendants will be given that land of the Canaanites, Hittites & others.

We read in **Exodus 34** of how God again repeated his promise to give his Israelite people, the land of the Amorites and Canaanites.(**SLIDE**)

IF they would obey his commands.-----

And the issue wasn't one of racism as such, but God jealously caring about his people so much, that he didn't want them to be lured away, by the Canaanites false religion.-----

But the books of Joshua & Judges tell us that the Israelites failed to trust and obey God, and drive out the nations.

Israel's enemies, the Canaanites continued to live in the Promised Land.-----

And when we fast forward to Jesus' day, Canaanites & Gentiles (non-Jews) still live among the Jews.-----

Coming back to **v21** we're told Jesus withdrew to the area of Tyre and Sidon.

Tyre itself, in modern-day Lebanon, is 55 k's north-east of the Sea of Galilee, as you can see on the **map**.

So Jesus has traveled quite a great distance, and gone to a Gentile area.

And 'a Canaanite woman from that region came and kept crying out, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely tormented by a demon."'

So this Gentile, who Jews would never eat with, on top of that is a Canaanite.

Maybe it's comparable to the way Germans were treated in Australia after WW2.-----

So this woman before she starts, is at a great distance, relationally, from the Jews; and from Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.-----

So for the disciples it's not surprising that Jesus ignores this Canaanite woman. And when she keeps crying out, the disciples want Jesus to tell her to go away, she's annoying.-----

And Jesus responds, **v24**, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."----- Jesus here is speaking a reality, not an insult.

Jesus came as Israel's promised King, and as Paul says in **Romans 1.16,(SLIDE)**

Salvation is first to the Jew, and then the Gentile.-----

In **Matt ch10** when Jesus sent the 12 disciples out on their first mission, he said, 'go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'.-----

That will soon change as we'll see, but at this point, the Jews wanted to keep the Gentiles at a great distance from them.-----

Jews sometimes called Gentiles 'dogs'.-----

So we're a little surprised when Jesus says to her, **v26**, "It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

But the Greek word for 'dog' Jesus uses is not the word for filthy feral dogs.

It's the word for a little dog, a house dog; your pet dog.

Here are my family's dogs(**SLIDE**), who do get scraps from our table 😊-----

Maybe Jesus said these words with a smile or with compassion in his eyes, we don't know.--

Still Jesus is making a real distinction between God's chosen people Israel, & others.-----

The Israelites are compared to the children of the family, and the Gentiles, this Gentile woman, to the pet dog.

Yes, it's humbling.-----

And most of us love our pet dogs.

But our children matter more to us than our dogs.-----

Again this language highlights the great distance from this woman and the Jews.

The great distance between her and Jesus.

She cannot make any claims or demands upon him.-----

And yet she comes to him still.

She comes seeking mercy from Jesus, with **Great faith, our next point.(SLIDE)**

So despite being viewed as unclean, unworthy; she approaches him because she knows he's a great Saviour.-----

Her daughter is severely suffering from a demon.

And she comes to Jesus seeking mercy, and salvation from the evil.-----

**v22**, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!'

Mercy is asking for something you don't deserve.

And she doesn't deserve mercy. None of us do.-----

But she comes to the one who can help. Help and save.-----

She calls him 'Lord', and 'the Son of David'.

She knew enough of the Hebrew Scriptures or Jewish religion, to know that the Jews were waiting for their Messiah, their promised King and Rescuer.

The promised descendent of King David from **2 Samuel 7(SLIDE)**,

Who would rule as King over a kingdom forever.-----

And this Canaanite woman believed it was Jesus.

And she was right.-----

Last week, Jesus accused the Jewish leaders, who knew their Bibles, of being blind.

Jesus called the Pharisees blind guides didn't he?-----

They should have known who Jesus was n' followed him.-----

They failed to confess Jesus as Lord, while this Gentile woman does.-----

Here we have a Gentile who sees truly, who's heard about & knows who Jesus is – the Lord, and promised King, who delivers people.

She knows he is a great Saviour.-----

And she comes to him seeking mercy.-----  
 And she wont be dissuaded, or put off.  
 In **v22** she keeps crying out, over and over, even when she's ignored.  
 Even when the disciples want her gone.-----  
 We don't know why Jesus ignored her at first.  
 As he says, his priority is to the people of Israel, at this stage.  
 But in the light of what happens, I suggest it was to **test her faith**.  
 To test her commitment and determination to come to him.-----  
 We may even say, while Jesus may sound harsh here, he is not wanting to destroy her faith  
 but draw her out, and reveal her faith.-----  
 She is like that persistent widow in **Luke 18**.  
 A story Jesus teaches so we will pray and pray, and not give up.-----  
**V25** she comes and kneels, or bows, before Jesus and says, 'Lord, help me!'  
 And when Jesus says it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs, she  
 replies, 'Yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.'-----  
 This woman displays and proves her faith in these words.  
 Her faith that Jesus can powerfully provide, and heal and save her daughter.-----  
 But more than that, she knows that the master Jesus has so much grace, that there's  
 enough for everyone.  
 Jesus' words in v26 don't mean there's nothing left for everyone else; there will remain  
 grace for Gentile dogs like her; like us.-----  
 The Jews can be provided for, and there can be scraps, for others too.  
 The grace of Jesus isn't limited; it doesn't run out.  
 It can meet Jews and Gentiles in their need; when they come to Jesus.-----  
 Jesus says, **v28**, woman, 'your faith is great'.**(SLIDE)**  
 And it was done as she desired, her daughter was healed at that moment.-----

Also, this woman's great faith, is sandwiched in between little faith by the Jews.  
 Back in **ch 14** when Jesus came to fearful disciples walking on the water;**(SLIDE)** and then  
 Peter went out to Jesus, then began to sink?-----  
 Jesus said, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'-----  
 Then in **ch16** Jesus says to all the disciples,**(SLIDE)** 'You of little faith'.-----  
 So sandwiched between the Jews lack of faith, we have the Gentile woman's example of  
 great faith.-----  
 It reminds us of the Gentile Centurion back in **ch8**, who came to Jesus saying,  
 "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my  
 servant will be healed.  
 And**(SLIDE)**, Jesus was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I  
 have not found anyone in Israel with so great a faith.-----  
 And his faith, and the Canaanite woman's faith, are like a **sign** that points to what is to  
 come.-----  
 In Jesus's life and earthly ministry he focuses on the Jews.  
 But he would die and rise again.  
 And the final words of Matthew's Gospel record him saying,**(SLIDE)**  
 'Go, and make disciples of<sup>e</sup> all nations...'-----  
 And in **Acts ch1**, before Christ ascended to heaven, he said,**(SLIDE)**  
 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my  
 witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."  
 God's plan is for the good news about Jesus, to go and save the non-Jewish Gentiles of the  
 world.-----  
 In fact it's been God's plan from the start.-----  
 In **Gen 12** God promised Abraham that through his line blessing would come to all peoples.  
 God sent Jonah to save Gentiles in Nineveh.-----

Isaiah promised that the Messiah would be a light to the nations.----(ch42)  
 Then in Matthew, Jesus' genealogy has 3 Gentile women in it – Rahab, Ruth & Bathsheba.  
 Jesus is worshipped by foreign wise men.  
 He praised the faith of the centurion and this woman.  
 And the Gospel of Jesus will go to the nations, and save people everywhere.----  
 In Matt 15 it's not the plan yet, but it is the plan.-----  
 It's just a matter of time.-----  
 So this Gentile woman's great faith in a great saviour, is a sign of things to come.-----  
 She symbolises the enormous future response to Jesus, from people around the world;  
 even us.-----

We are the fruit and recipients of God's sovereign and saving plans.  
 We have come to the Lord seeking mercy, a salvation we don't deserve.  
 And the Lord Jesus has saved us too.-----  
 If Jesus is not the Lord who has saved you, he can be.  
 You need only turn to him and trust in him.-----  
 Lois Lane in Superman Returns (**SLIDE**) may have said, "The world doesn't need a Saviour  
 and neither do I".  
 But friends, we do.-----  
 We do need saving from sin & death, from the devil & judgement.  
 And Jesus can.-----  
 No matter who you are, where you are from;  
     what you are like, or what you've done,(**SLIDE**)  
     Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved – **Romans 10**.-----  
     You don't need great faith, even little faith saves.-----  
     Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.-----

And brothers and sisters, we who know we're saved, I hope that you're struck by, amazed  
 by, the sovereign plans of God.  
 And how they are being foreshadowed and worked out here, and over hundreds and  
 thousands of years, even for our good.-----  
 So praise God that Jesus came to save Gentiles too.  
 Praise God for the scraps of bread from the master's table, that have saved us.-----

### **The final point is, Great Deeds.(SLIDE)-----**

In **v29** Jesus moves on and returns to the Sea of Galilee.  
 Mark ch7 tells us Jesus is still in a Gentile region.  
 And crowds are coming to him and people with many kinds of disabilities or injuries.  
 And in compassion, Jesus heals them all.-----  
 With great deeds, great miracles, the crowd 'saw those unable to speak talking, the  
     crippled restored, the lame walking, and the blind seeing,  
     and they gave glory to the God of Israel.'-----  
 Bones and muscles, ligaments and tendons, organs and tissues, instantly reformed, restored  
 by the great saviour Jesus.-----  
 And in response to these great deeds, the people watching were amazed and give **glory to  
 the God of Israel**.  
 This language suggests they're Gentiles, glorifying the true and living God.-----  
 And God deserves to be praised and glorified by people today too; by us too.  
 Whether he heals in a great way, or by his mercy we recover from covid, or a gastro bug.-----  
 How are you going at giving God the glory for the mercy he shows you?-----

But maybe you're wondering, **does God even still do miracles today**, and answer prayer  
 in amazing ways?-----  
 Yes he does!

The abundant miracles during the lives of Jesus and the apostles, were a unique time in salvation history.

Yet I've seen the Lord answer prayers in miraculous n' marvellous ways.-----

A number of you have testified that to me too.-----

I was talking with someone this week who experienced a wonderful answer to prayer regarding a tumour, and the role of faith in that.-----

Let me share another true story:

[prayforturley.com/ Bbible league]

**A Turkish family was concerned for Sait**, a 40yo relative who was mentally disturbed and constantly paced the streets of their town.

In a desperate attempt they rented a car and brought him to a community of believers in a larger town and to Ali, the Turkish pastor there.----

Sait was filthy and had a long messy beard, urine-stained pants & finger nails over an inch long. He couldn't talk and was not in his right mind.

They asked Ali if he could do anything to help.

He replied, "Jesus can, but you must believe he can".-----

They said, 'If we didn't believe He could help, would we have come 5 hrs to see you?'

Ali went up to the bearded man, gave him a big hug and prayed for him.

Sait then amazed them by becoming coherent and speaking for the first time in 5 yrs. A week later Ali got a call to say he was cleaned up, eating well, no longer wandering the streets and still in his right mind.-----

Glory be to God.-----

However, God doesn't always give us what we pray for, does he.-----

Even when we persist in prayer and don't give up.-----

Yet, Jesus is still the Great Saviour, risen and living, and active by his Spirit.

He still has all authority, and knows what it is best.-----

And the great deeds, which Christ can and still does, may not always be what we ask for.-----

Maybe his great deed is sustaining your faith and trust, like in **1 Peter 1.5(SLIDE)---**

So you endure, even while going without.-----

I'd like to share two stories of people trusting in their great Saviour, even when the hardship continues.-----

**Sheridan Voysey** is a radio host and author.

And in an interview he said, (**SLIDE**) 'I think we're often disciplined by Disney more than we're disciplined by the Scriptures.---

We're so used to the happy ending; yes we know there's going to be a battle but we will get there in the end'.-----

He and his wife Merryn tried for years to have children but they could not conceive.

In a 2017 interview he said, 'anyone who has been through a broken dream has already read 'The seven steps to a Better life'-type book – and found they are lacking. It's too easy to come in and say, 'Just pray and your broken dream will become a new beginning.'

I want to be really sensitive about how the cross shows that the worst event can be redeemed into the greatest event in history. The worst experience that comes to us, can, in the hands of God, be turned into something very surprising for the benefit of not just ourselves, but primarily for others'.-----

The challenge is to trust him, isn't it?-----

Sam (**SLIDE**) was a boy at my last church.

He was born with Down Syndrome, and died 10 years ago, from cancer, at just 17.

His Mum, Morag Zwartz wrote about losing her 17yo Samuel, having precariously ill parents and another son with life-threatening health problems all at the same time.

Sam's cancer kept returning, with relapse after relapse, until he died – but Sam had a wonderful simple faith in the Lord Jesus. ☺-----

Morag shares of being very prone to worry, anxiety and fear.

And yet, in her words, 'I can say with genuine conviction that my hope is in God who does not fail me, and I have proved him over and over again. I cannot say that I have reached my greatest desire, which is to love God without wavering, without fear, and unmoved by calamity or death. I know, I know perfect love will displace those fears, and God will keep me in perfect peace, when I keep my thoughts fixed on him.'

She says, part of my journey from Pentecostal (and confused wilderness) to Reformed has been the embracing of a God who is too great to be contained and explained.

Who does not conform to our very human (and erroneous) notions of how things should be for nice, earnest, Bible-believing folks.

Who does not owe us an explanation for why our child is born deformed, or disabled, or ill unto death.----

It is an [indescribable] blessing and joy though, to be able to state, and feel, that God does as he chooses... since his knowledge and his providence are way beyond my comprehension.-----

Morag says, I was convinced that when Samuel died I would lose my sanity... and there were many times when...with both sons seriously ill in hospital simultaneously, I found myself more consciously, desperately, dependent upon God than I manage at other times... I discovered that while we grit our teeth and grasp onto him, God meanwhile is holding onto us, and His is the grip that matters! His is the one that makes ours feeble and fleeting by comparison.-----

I know that when we ask and pray and don't get what we long for, it's really hard.

I think the Canaanite woman, as well as Sheridan and Morag, all highlight for us, great faith, in the great Saviour.-----

Don't give up trusting in him!

Let's pray