



**A BETTER
WORD**

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Jesus the Merciful

Mark 7:24–37

THE BIG IDEA

The compassionate king gives grace to those who don't deserve it.

SERMON SUMMARY

Jesus has traveled into Tyre and Sidon — Gentile territory — and a Syrophoenician woman throws herself at his feet, an approach that would have been scandalous. Her daughter has an unclean spirit, and her desperation has become faith. Jesus answers, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” He calls her a “dog,” but he is not being cruel; he is walking her to the edge to get her to speak her faith out loud. And she does: “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” If I am a dog, then you are my master, and your scraps are enough.

The second story builds on the first. In the Decapolis they bring Jesus a man who is deaf with a speech impediment — an outcast even among outcasts, assumed to be suffering for sin or under a demon. Jesus takes him aside privately, touches his ears and tongue, looks to heaven, and sighs. Every action is symbolic: the touch of the Savior heals, the look upward shows dependence on the Father, and the sigh reveals compassion. “Ephphatha — be opened.” He deserved nothing and was healed anyway. Put the two accounts together and you get the picture of God’s grace to the undeserving, given compassionately.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The Syrophoenician woman came in desperation, but Pastor Nick argued that her persistence is what marked it as faith. What is the difference between being desperate with God and being persistent with him? What are you persistent about?
2. Jesus had healed Gentiles before. So why did he answer her the way he did in verse 27? What did his answer draw out of her that a simple “yes” would not have?
3. Her reply does not argue with the unflattering label of “dog.” “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Compare that with the posture that says, “I won’t believe in a God who lets this happen to me.” Which one is closer to how you actually approach God?
4. Notice the details of the second healing — the private setting, the touch, the look to heaven, the sigh. What does each one tell you about the Savior? Why does it matter that Jesus himself depended on the Father in prayer?

5. The deaf man could not hear anyone. And on our own we cannot hear from God. Where does that leave the idea that you have earned anything from him? How does Ephesians 2:12–13 describe the same distance being closed?

LIVING IT OUT

Pastor Nick shared the story of Alexander the Great. He was asked for an enormous sum of money as a dowry. When his treasurer objected Alexander said, “Let him have it all. He treats me like a king and proves by what he asks that he believes me to be both rich and generous.” Entitlement demands what it thinks it has earned. Faith asks boldly precisely because it knows it has earned nothing.

Heart Check: Where has entitlement crept into how you deal with God — the quiet sense that he owes you an outcome? What have you stopped asking him for because you assumed the answer, or because asking felt presumptuous?

This Week: Bring one request to God every day this week that you have given up on, and pray it the way the Syrophoenician woman did: honestly, persistently, and without any claim that you deserve the answer.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.’”

— **Mark 7:37**

Thank Jesus for going out of his way to be among people who had no claim on him — then ask him to replace whatever entitlement you carry with the humble, persistent faith that takes him at his word.

Your Prayer:

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