

Recognized by a Canaanite Woman

(Mat. 15:21-28; 2/7/10)

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is that Jesus healed a Gentile woman, as an exception to His focus on the Jews. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to minister as God leads us, even if it takes us away from what we were focusing on.

Body:

Read Matthew 15:21-24

I. An Unmet Need. Jesus is approached by a Canaanite woman. She pleads for Jesus to heal her demon possessed daughter. When He did not answer her, His disciples urged Him to send her away. Jesus talked about being sent to the lost sheep of Israel, not to others.

Applications –

- **People problems.** Notice in vs. 22 that a lady had problems with the devil causing harm to her child. People still have all kinds of problems today. Among our many problems is the devil is still trying to harm our children. The devil uses drugs, violence, hopelessness, and ungodly sex to harm our children. *Let's be mindful that people have real problems.* Too often we get so focused on church stuff that we forget people problems. People don't come to church to just learn church stuff (e.g., Bible stories, dress code, songs, etiquette, and Greek). They want answers or at least responses to their problems.

- **Distracting church folk.** Notice in vs. 23 that the disciples were almost a distraction to the ministry that Jesus was focusing on. If we are not careful, we can be distracted by church folk and minor church issues, instead of being focused on God's will for our lives. First, we need to grow up to be an asset in the ministry, instead of a distraction. Second, we need to work on the focus needed to look beyond the title and seniority of those around us to stay focused on God's will. *Let's work on not being distracted by secondary issues.*

- **Distracting problems.** Notice in vs. 24 that Jesus had a mind to stay focused on His divine assignment. The Jews were a greater priority than Gentiles, during the time of our text. It is important to be in tuned with God's priorities for our lives. For example, we need to make sure that our physical and mental health are being taken care of. We need to make sure that our finances are being taken care of, especially since we cannot count on big brother (i.e., government) nor big business (i.e., 30 years at one company and then live off of a pension). Too often we can be distracted by important issues that are not as important as what God is calling us to do. For example, there are many issues that need attention in our communities, but if we try to do them all at the same time, we are likely to be rather ineffective in making a sustained positive impact. *Let's focus on keeping God's priorities for our lives as our main focus.* In order to find

God's priorities for our lives, it often takes prayer, study, wise counsel, and choosing to believe something to be God's priorities.

Read Matthew 15:25-28

II. A Prayer Answered. The woman persisted in her requests. Jesus talked about how the children's bread is not to be given to the dogs, a reference to the privileged position of the Jews above that of the Gentiles. The woman replied with great faith, as she talked about how even the dogs or pets can eat some of the crumbs under the master's table. Jesus commended her for her faith and healed her daughter.

Applications –

- **Humble patient faith.** Notice in vss. 25-27 that the woman demonstrated humble patient faith in God healing her child. Too often we are not humble enough in our requests. We can almost act like we are entitled to a miracle. Too often we are impatient. We want our miracle right now. And then we can stop believing, as demonstrated by our behavior. *Let's work on humble patient faith in God.*

- **Trusting God whether He heals or doesn't.** Notice in vs. 28 that God healed the daughter. There is absolutely no question that God is still in the healing business. Obviously, we should rejoice, when God heals. However, God doesn't always heal. *Let's develop the faith needed to keep trusting and obeying God, even when He doesn't do what we want Him to do.* We must learn to trust that God knows what is best for us and when it is best for us.

- **Being open to God's making an exception.** Notice in vs. 28 that Jesus makes an exception. Even though He came to minister to the Jews, this Gentile woman's faith was so remarkable that He made an exception. As we strive to live according to God's will, we should be open to God wanting us to make an exception. For example, the Pastor rarely gives people money on the street who are begging for money. However, there are rare exceptions, where he feels led to do so. You may have your mind made up about what job you are going to take, but at the last minute God may lead you in a different direction. *Let's be open to God's using us to extend mercy, in an exceptional way.* Sometimes God operates outside the box of past practices and even reason. Prayer, study, and wise counsel can help us discern God's will.

Conclusion: Let's work on ministering as God leads us, even when His way is an exception to what we are focused on. God has much for those who obey His will.