

Mark 7:24-37, The One about the Faith of the Outsiders, 7/24/22

Have you heard of Imposter Syndrome? Imposter Syndrome is the feeling that regardless of what amount of success you've had or your status, you feel like an outsider, inadequate, unworthy, and you have this feeling that eventually people are going to find you out. Kind of like Big Bird here [Picture]. Even famous people have experienced Imposter Syndrome, like Actor Tom Hanks. Hanks once in an interview said, "No matter what I've done, there comes a point where you think, 'How did I get here? When are they going to discover that I am, in fact, a fraud and take everything away from me?'"¹ You don't have to be famous to experience imposter syndrome. You can be a businessman, athlete, manager or a pastor like me. I remember being invited to speak at a lead pastor's forum in the first year and I'm sitting on a panel with these pastors who had decades under their belt and saying to myself... "What am I doing here? I don't belong. I'm an outsider and it's just a matter of time until they realize that."

Psychologists will tell you that the cure for Imposter Syndrome is to celebrate your own success, cultivate self-compassion and believe in your own ability to achieve. [Title Slide] Except what if it's true... Now what happens when your feelings of unworthiness and inadequacy aren't just feelings, but reality? What about when spiritually, cosmically you don't just feel like big bird, but you actually are? Today in our study through the gospel of Mark we will meet a true outsider, unworthy to approach Jesus in every way both culturally and religiously. Some of us come in here today battling real imposter syndrome spiritually. You feel unworthy and those feelings of inadequacy have kept distance between you and encountering Jesus. In some ways this outsider we meet today is all of us, and her interaction with Jesus will teach us something critical about how outsiders are brought inside to receive the grace and blessing of God in salvation.

Mark 7:²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. Jesus continues to experience conflict with the religious leaders in Israel and leaves with his disciples to Tyre. Now Tyre was in the heart of Phoenicia, gentile territory along the Mediterranean coast about 40 miles Northwest of Galilee. Let me show you a map. Tyre was an enemy of Israel and has a long, sordid history of Baal worship and corruption. There's no reason for a Jew, let alone a Jewish Rabbi like Jesus to be in Tyre. And Jesus didn't just stay for a day, or a week, he was there for extended time, possibly months traveling in Tyre, Sidon and the Decapolis, 10 Gentile cities surrounding Israel. So why would Jesus be there? Partially, it's a fulfillment of prophecy. Tyre is significant in messianic prophecy because in Psalm 87 Tyre is named among pagan cities that would experience salvation. See, Jesus is demonstrating that he isn't just a Jewish savior, he isn't just a savior for those that chose the right religion, he came to be the savior of all peoples, all religious backgrounds, even the spiritual outsiders.

He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. Good luck, Jesus. Jesus was the most sought-after person in the region, everyone had either heard or experienced first-hand the ministry and miracles of Jesus. ²⁵ **In fact, as soon as**

¹ <https://www.entrepreneur.com/slideshow/304273>

she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet.

²⁶ *The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.* Now this woman was the ultimate portrait of an outsider. Pagan women didn't approach Jewish Rabbis. If that's not bad enough, Matthew's gospel tells us she was a Canaanite- a wicked people who came under God's judgment during the days of Joshua, they were supposed to have been destroyed. And yet, here she is and her daughter is demon-possessed... I mean, you thought your house was dysfunctional. If you feel like an outsider when you come to church, like you don't fit in because of whatever is going on in your house, this lady knows exactly what that feels like. She had none of the religious, moral or cultural credentials to be in a conversation with Jesus. And yet here she is face to face with the holiest being in the universe. And she's begging Jesus for help. The picture painted in the gospels is that she's almost demanding it, she's tenacious. Matthew's account tells us the disciples tried to get Jesus to send her away, but she wasn't taking no for an answer. The disciples are indignant, "Where does she get off? Who are you, you're a nobody, you're less than a nobody." Where does this brazenness come from? One author says- "There are wimps who run away from danger, there are heroes who run into the fires...and then there are parents." If your child is in jeopardy, you simply do whatever it takes to save them.²

²⁷ *"First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."* Ouch. Now, remember we are calling this series the "Real Jesus?" because many times we are tempted to create a DIY Jesus where we take the parts of Jesus we like and we discard the teachings of Jesus we don't like...well this is one of the things Jesus said that we may not like. "My Jesus would never talk to someone like that!" A response like this in our cultural lens appears misogynistic at least... maybe racist, certainly not politically correct. What is going on here? What appears to be an insult is actually a parable. It's a metaphor. It's a parable using the order of food priority in the household. You feed your children and then you give what's left to Fido, but Fido doesn't eat before your kids do. The point is that there is order to God's redemptive plan in history starting with his chosen people, Israel, and then out to the nations. Jesus was sent to Israel first and primarily to show that he was the fulfillment of Scriptures promise. But after he was resurrected he immediately said the disciples go to all the nations. Remember Paul is *Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.* But within this parable is also an invitation. We might say Jesus is drawing her in- "Your opportunity is coming."

²⁸ *"Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."* Now this response is a remarkable display of bold, persistent, theologically astute faith. What makes it so remarkable is she gives an accurate response from within the parable. She says, "I'm picking up what you're laying down...I meet you and raise you one..." How many of you have a dog at home. Where does your dog sit when you are eating? *Cosmo Picture*... Well right underneath

² Thanks to Tim Keller for that idea in *Jesus the King*, p.93

the messiest eater...or the most compassionate. This woman recognizes her state spiritually and religiously, and yet knows that because it's Jesus' table- it's a buffet and there is plenty to go around...after all, this is the Jesus who fed 20,000 people with a kid's meal and had 12 baskets left over! She's saying "I know I'm not a Jew. I know I'm not part of the covenant people. I know I'm on the outside. And I don't deserve anything. I know I belong to an idolatrous country, an idolatrous race. I know all that. But I also know who you are and I believe there is plenty that will spill down to me!" I love this response! ²⁹ Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Jesus said "What a remarkable response." And heals her daughter on the spot, even at a distance. This woman, somehow by faith, understood salvation in a way that even Jesus' own disciples didn't get.

Pastor Tim Keller writes: "We don't really have anything like this kind of assertiveness in the West. We stand on our rights and our goodness saying, 'This is what I'm owed.' But this woman does not do that at all.

This is rightless assertiveness something we know little about. She's not saying, 'Lord give me what I deserve on the basis of my goodness.'

She saying 'Lord, give me what I don't deserve on the basis of your goodness and I need it now.'³ On one hand she is not too proud- She sees herself as she is, unworthy of Jesus. She doesn't say, "How dare you call me a dog! I will not tolerate that! Just wait until I tweet out this experience, you are going to get cancelled!" No- she's saying I accept that. I know where my position is, I know who I am, I'm a sinner. But on the other hand, she not too ashamed. She doesn't allow her unworthiness to keep her from the invitation of the grace and mercy from Jesus...because she understands the character of the one at who's feet she sits...that it is only by his sheer grace that she will get anything.

[Title Slide] This story unlocks something essential about the nature of eternal salvation and why so many people reject the grace Jesus offers to us. There are two self-absorbed ways to reject Jesus. One way is by being too proud. You say I'm good enough on my own, I don't need a Savior, It's those other people that need saving. I pay my taxes, I'm generous, I contribute to society, I even recycle. And in doing so they fail to see their true state. It's like the Laodicean church in Revelation 3 ¹⁷ You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. The problem may be that you've been comparing your own morality to others you this are less moral than you. Maybe what you need is to get face-to-face with the purity of Jesus to see your true state and how far you are. But the other self-absorbed way to reject Jesus is through being too self-loathing. You say I'm just so awful, I'm a fraud, it's just a matter of time until God finds out who I really am and he will reject me like everyone else, I've screwed up too badly, he just couldn't love me. And so we run from him in rebellion searching for love and acceptance elsewhere, we

³ Tim Keller, *Jesus the King*, p.96

avoid him, we stay on the outskirts and margins of faith... never allowing him to get to close. Friends what that means is we really have it wrong, you don't know who God is.

Title Slide You might be here today or watching online today and you are experiencing imposture syndrome right now. You feel like you don't belong here, you are too dirty, too much of a screw-up, you don't fit the stereotype. You feel like one of the outsiders. But just like Jesus came to the outsiders of Tyre, Jesus comes to you! He didn't just leave Israel, he left Heaven and came to live among us! And the way to access God's saving grace is like this woman-rightless assertiveness. Keller- "She's not saying, 'Lord give me what I deserve on the basis of my goodness.' She saying 'Give me what I don't deserve on the basis of your goodness.'" This is not the message of our world. On one hand our world says- I'm OK, you're OK, we are all OK. There is nothing about you that needs to change. You can live however feels right to you and as long as you accept yourself you are fine. This is new age spirituality or moral therapeutic deism...Or our world says- "You have to earn it, you have to work really hard and make yourself perfect so that it can't be taken from you, and God has to accept you... this is religion. Both are false gospels. Our sin has separated us eternally from a perfect and holy God. Just as this woman, we have no right to approach him, we can't clean ourselves up enough to possibly enter his presence. And until we come to that place of honesty and humility we cannot receive the free gift of grace and mercy of salvation.

Now this drives religious people crazy to say that. How can Jesus decide to be so gracious and forgiving? Where is the justice in letting sinners, criminals, bad people in? Only because that free gift to us came at a great cost to Him. On that cross Jesus took all the sin of the world on his shoulders. Continuing the parable that Jesus gave- The child of God had to become a dog so that we would become sons and daughters at the table of eternal blessing. And wouldn't you know it, there was another outsider just like this woman hanging next to Jesus on that Good Friday? Remember the thief? He was truly an outsider. A criminal. Do you remember what he said? **Luke 23:⁴¹ We indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong."**

⁴² And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" ⁴³ And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." This outsider didn't say, "I deserve paradise...no he recognized just how much he didn't deserve it, but he trusted the character of the one who did. Listen to how Alister Begg talks about this...

[Video]

[Title Slide] Are you coming to Jesus like these outsiders? If you died tonight and you stood before God and He said, why should I let you in? Are you answering that in the first person?

Gospel Prayer, invitation.