

Faith in unlikely places

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[0:00] Matthew chapter 15, verses 21 through 28. You can look there in your Bibles with me. I'm going to read that out loud. Matthew 15, beginning in verse 21. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, Send her away, for she's crying out after us. He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she came and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me. And he answered, It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

She said, Yes, Lord. Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered her, O woman, great is your faith.

[1:08] Be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was healed instantly. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

Lord, we pray that you would help us to understand this. Really, there are some hard phrases here that may be difficult for us. But, Lord, we know also that your word is spiritually discerned. And we pray for the help of your spirit.

Even while we're separated, we know your word speaks of two or three gathered together in your spirit being present. But, Lord, we're in unique times. And we pray you'd send your spirit to all who are listening.

That you would work in the hearts of those who hear this word preached. That you would give understanding. But also that you would give a love for you, a joy in you, a worshiping of you through your word.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. As we come to this passage, and it's described here of this woman, especially in light of what we've seen previously with Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees and the Sadducees, both groups would have seen this woman as someone who was unclean.

[2:10] And that's part of the point even in light of what we've seen in the last passage. Jesus talked about what defiles a person. Remember back in verse 11, he says, It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth that defiles a person.

And so this encounter with Jesus that we see here immediately follows Jesus' teaching about what defiles a person. And about the heart and what's inside a person.

What makes someone truly, spiritually unclean or defiled. And so what we see in this passage really is an example of what Jesus has just taught. Now Matthew has included an account of what Jesus did afterwards.

There's some sequential movement here, some chronological movement in the book. But Matthew's chosen to include this, I think, to illustrate the point of what Jesus has just taught. Jesus has just said, it's not what's on the outside that makes us unclean, but what's on the inside.

And likewise, holiness is something that's internal. And that's what we looked at last time. And so now Jesus is moving on. And so we've seen the Pharisees who outwardly look righteous, but inwardly are defiled.

[3:18] They're whitewashed tombs. They're dead inside. And now Jesus is going to this area and he meets a woman who's a Canaanite. And this woman typifies what it means to be truly saved, to be someone who's changed, who has a right heart.

So in this moving exchange between this grieving mother, desperate mother, and our Lord, we learn a tremendous lesson about saving faith.

But we also learn a sweet lesson about the compassion of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And so I want to look at this in three parts. First, I want us to look at what Jesus is doing even in terms of the relationship with Gentiles.

So the breaking down of barriers to salvation is what I want to look at in the first point. The relationship of the gospel to Gentiles. But secondly, I want us to look at this woman and what Jesus says to this woman.

Because the words himself are pretty hard. And we want to understand what's going on with this woman and why Jesus says what he says to her. And then finally, I want us to look at what is true faith.

[4 : 21] And this really is expanding on what we've seen in the last passage. And as I said, that Matthew is really giving this here as an example. And Jesus is even teaching this to his disciples as an example of here's what true faith is.

So here we have an example of what we saw or illustration of what we saw in our last sermon. So again, we want to look at barriers to salvation. And Jesus is breaking those down.

The woman and then what true faith is. So first, the Gentiles being included also are the breaking down of barriers. We've talked some already about Jesus having left the area of Jerusalem where the persecution was increasing.

The crowds were rejecting him. Even in his hometown, he was rejected. He's moved into the area of Galilee. But we see now in this section that Jesus travels to a Gentile region.

To that of Tyre and Sidon. Now, if you can picture on a map or maybe you have this in the back of your Bibles and you want to look there. But you can picture the Sea of Galilee.

[5 : 26] And then, so that region is north of Jerusalem. Well, Jesus is gone now. Tyre is 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. And Sidon is about another 25 miles north.

So I know when we think of 25 miles, that doesn't sound that long. And maybe some of us commute to work even longer than that. But you have to picture they're walking here. And so as they travel here, this is a long way away.

And they've moved out of the region of Israel into a Gentile region. And in all of the Gospels, this is the only time we have included an account of Jesus leaving a Gentile region.

Excuse me, leaving an Israelite, a Jewish region, in his ministry. We know he goes to Egypt as a child. But in terms of his ministry, this is the only time he leaves the Jews and goes into a Gentile region for ministry.

And then it becomes even more dramatic because the woman he encounters there, we see in verse 22, that she's a Canaanite woman. Now, this is the only time that the word Canaanite appears in the New Testament.

[6 : 29] But you may be familiar with the Canaanites. They were an ancient tribal enemy of Israel. They were the people that the Israelites were commanded to destroy when they entered the Promised Land, which the Promised Land was called the land of Canaan.

So the Canaanites were the people originally in the Promised Land. God had judged them. He had sent Israel as judgment to really wipe them out and give the Promised Land instead to the Israelites.

And you may remember that they failed in that mission and that the Canaanites remained. And they were a plague to the Israelites over many hundreds of years. They continued to bother and cause problems for the Israelites, even drawing Israelites in to worship their false gods.

And so the term Canaanite would have had a very negative connotation. And Matthew is the most Jewish of all the Gospels. He really focuses on Jewish aspects. And so as a Jewish reader reading this, a Canaanite would have had a very bad connotation to it.

And this woman is a Canaanite. One commentator, William Barclay, he says, The supreme significance of this passage is that it foreshadows the going out of the Gospel to the whole world.

[7 : 40] It shows us the beginning of the end of all barriers. And so I believe that's really the point of what Jesus is doing here in this passage. He's left the Jewish area.

He's gone into a Gentile area. He encounters a Canaanite who has great faith. And we really see the breaking down of barriers. Now that may sound funny because we're going to look in a second at what he says to the woman.

And it seems like those barriers are still up. But what I'm arguing is that Jesus' whole encounter with this woman is intended to show that he's tearing down the barriers. That the Gospel's not just for the Jews, but that the Gospel's for the whole world.

And so we see even as the Gospel of Matthew ends, right at the very last chapter we have the Great Commission, where Jesus tells them to make disciples of all nations.

And so Jesus here is setting an example for his disciples that he's going to command them later, take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. And so Jesus is showing them these Gentiles aren't unclean just because of these things on the outside.

[8 : 40] In fact, they very well may be more clean, if I can put it in that term. They may be less defiled than some who are in Israel, even some of the religious leaders, because God's working in their heart to save them, to change their heart.

Let's look at Jesus' encounter with the woman and the words that he says to her. Based on all that I've said, if it's true that this passage is meant to mark the going out of the Gospel to the whole world, and the end of barriers, why does Jesus initially refuse her?

And then even more so, when he speaks to her, why does he even refer to her as a Gentile dog? Which is really what's said to her in this passage. I mean, really, it's unusual for Jesus to use such language in the first place.

It seems contrary to the very point of the story that I'm arguing. So why does Jesus do this? Well, first let me describe a little bit for you to understand the words that Jesus says.

It's common, it was common in that day, for Jews to call Gentiles dogs. They even refer to Gentile dogs. And really what that means is that they were unclean.

[9 : 46] They were defiled. They weren't allowed into the inner courts of the temple. They were set apart from those religious exercises and being part of God's people. And so they looked down upon them.

And calling them a dog was a way of looking down upon them. We might think of it even as a racial slur. I think it goes beyond that. There's a religious connotation to this.

Beyond even just it being about race. It's about whether or not they're saved. Whether or not they're a people, a part of the people of God. And so what's indicated is they were outside of God's people. They were ceremonially unclean. And so it would have been common for Jewish people to use this kind of terminology. In Ephesians 2.12, Paul, writing to the church in Ephesus, speaks about their condition before they were saved.

And here's what he says. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[10 : 47] That's really what's being indicated for the Gentiles in that time period. That's what it would have meant. That they would have been separated from God's people. They were without hope and without God. And they were in the world.

And as we consider Jesus' words, I think it's also important to say that one thing that's not communicated that we cannot really see is that oftentimes the look on a person's face, the tone in which they say something, indicates a lot about what's being said.

So when we look at this, we have to understand that first off, Jesus didn't sin. Whatever Jesus is doing with this, he's not using a racial slur. He's not sinning against her.

He's not calling her names. He's doing this for a purpose. And we're going to see what that is in a moment. But I want you to see that what he's doing is not sin. And since we don't have his tone, who knows how he said it?

At the very least, I could see someone saying it in an angry tone and looking down upon someone. And that's obviously not what's going on. So what is Jesus doing? Well, as I've said already, I believe Jesus is doing this for a purpose.

[11 : 52] He's specifically choosing these words for a purpose. And what is that purpose? That's really what we want to know. He's not simply being rude. He's not being insensitive to her.

He's doing this for a reason. He's doing it for her benefit. In fact, the exchange between Christ and this woman is not only for her benefit, I would argue he's actually doing it for the purpose of teaching the disciples.

Now, you may remember that the disciples are Jewish. They would have been familiar with this terminology. They might have even been nodding their heads when Jesus said that, yeah, we don't give that kind of, we don't, no, no, not for dogs.

And they may have been agreeing with this. And Jesus very well is doing this for their sake as well to help them in understanding what's really going on here. But I've argued he's doing it to benefit her, to benefit the disciples, and for a purpose.

Now, Bible scholars have come up with a number of purposes. I think there's at least three reasons that Jesus uses this terminology with her. And I think all these are likely to be true to varying degrees, maybe even progressively true.

[13:02] But first, I would say that Jesus is doing this to test the woman's faith. When she first asked the question to him, he's silent. It says he didn't answer her a word.

He didn't speak to her at all. So she makes this request to him, and he seems to exclude her by the later comment. He ignores her, as it were, by the lack of comment at first.

But later, even by saying this about the Gentile dogs, he seems to exclude her. He says to the disciples, apparently with her present, that he came only for the house of Israel.

He came for the Jews. And so all these comments would have pushed her away in some way. Jesus, as it were, has laid a barrier to salvation, if we can imagine that.

Not as though there is a barrier to salvation. I'm arguing he's breaking down the barriers. But he set up this barrier to say, you understand how things work. I'm a Jewish Messiah. In fact, you may have even called her words, she calls him the son of David.

[14:04] He's a Jewish Messiah. I've come for the house of Israel. You're not of the house of Israel. What does that mean for you? Is there salvation to be had with Jesus for her? Will Jesus heal her daughter or not?

And so he's laid a barrier to salvation in ways similar to what she's heard her whole life. She would have heard that before, as a Canaanite woman, not being able to worship God the way the Israelites would.

But what we see in this is that true faith persists, and true faith perseveres, even when the outcome seems unlikely. So it doesn't seem likely that she's going to get what she wants, but she doesn't care.

There's nowhere else she can go. And so Jesus is testing her faith. And in so doing, he's showing an example of what great faith she has. If Jesus would not have laid those barriers, we wouldn't have seen the great faith that's typified in her.

And I would argue again that one reason Jesus is doing that is for the sake of the disciples. It still hasn't sunk in what he just taught about what makes someone unclean. And so they look at this woman, and probably like most Jews would have, they look at this woman and say, she's unclean.

[15:13] She cannot come into the kingdom. Jesus can't heal her or her daughter. And Jesus, by setting up these barriers, shows, no, look at the great faith she has.

Look at her utter reliance upon Jesus and upon God. Secondly, I'd say Jesus wanted to strengthen her faith to make it even stronger. His answers in verse 24 and verse 26 communicate what an extraordinary blessing she was receiving.

How great it is for Jesus to do this. This is, in some ways, seemingly contrary to what his mission was. His mission primarily was to the Jews. And so, for her to receive such a blessing, it's meant to encourage her as well.

I've said already, she called Jesus Son of David. And his answer seems to draw out, what is the full meaning of that? Do you understand what that means for me to be the Son of David? As we've seen already in Matthew's Gospel, to be the Son of David means that he's the one who's fulfilling the covenant to David.

David was promised that there would be a son that would come from him that would sit on the throne and reign forever. And of course, the hope was it was going to be Solomon. But it wasn't.

[16:21] And so, subsequent generations we keep looking for who is this promised one who's going to reign on God's throne forever. And they die. King after king dies.

And then, as it were, the line seems to be lost. They go into exile for 400 years. I'm sorry, they go into exile for 70 years, but there's no king reigning even after they return.

And now here they are under Roman oppression. And she calls out that he's the Son of David. And he's basically strengthening her faith and saying, do you really understand what that means? Do you really believe me to be the Messiah?

As I said, he's a Jewish Messiah. So was there really blessing for her? Well, he wanted to strengthen her faith. Thirdly, I would say Jesus wanted to highlight what he was going to do.

And what I mean by that is that he's going to answer the prayer of a Gentile. He's going to answer the prayer. So he wants to highlight how unusual this is, what a blessing this is. Jesus wanted the woman and the disciples to have a greater understanding of what he was going to do.

[17:27] It was extraordinary. It was unexpected. If Jesus was a Jewish Messiah, a Jewish king, that he would come and answer the prayers of this woman.

And that really draws out the point that this gospel is for the whole world and that the barriers have been broken down. And so, what I'm arguing is that Jesus sets up these barriers not because he believes them to be barriers, not because he believes that she's a Gentile dog, but what he wants her to see and what he wants the disciples to see is this is how things have been understood. This is in line with what we just saw about what's happened with the Pharisees who come to him all the way out where he is from Jerusalem and they come and argue against his disciples not ceremonially washing their hands before they eat.

That defiles them. That makes them unclean. And Jesus is saying, no, you don't understand what makes people unclean. It's a condition of their heart. And so, likewise, Jesus is continuing to teach the woman and his disciples, look, here's an example of this.

By every standard that we can think of, this woman ought to be unclean. But she's not. And the Pharisees who are teaching, they are unclean. He talks about them in the last passage we looked at last week.

[18:42] He refers to them as, weeds in the field, like in the weeded and tares. They're going to be cast into hell. But this woman who's a Canaanite is saved.

And so he demonstrates to them these barriers are being broken down. We're going to see in the passage that follows as well, he feeds 4,000. And again, we see his compassion as he ministers to, in a Gentile region, his compassion for those who are outside of the house of Israel.

And then all this is followed in chapter 16 by Peter's profession of faith. And we see how the progression is going, how they're understanding more and more about who Jesus really and truly is. But thirdly, in this passage, I want us to look at what is true faith? What does this teach us about the nature of true faith? Well, in verse 28, Jesus says, great is your faith.

What exactly made this woman an example of great faith? Let me say there's only two places where Jesus at any point says that someone's faith is great or commends their faith to this kind of standard.

[19:53] Publicly praise them for the faith. It's the Canaanite woman we have here and the other is the Roman centurion in chapter 8, verse 10. And a Roman and a Canaanite, both of them are Gentiles and they are the two that get commended for their faith by Jesus publicly.

And so again, we see this emphasis in Matthew that faith isn't where we might expect it to be. The great faith that we see demonstrated here in Matthew's gospel isn't foremost by the disciples. I said already, Peter's going to make a confession of faith later. We're going to see even as Jesus goes to the cross, their faith wavers, but they continue to hold to him as it's seen later on. But the strongest faith that we see already in the gospel has been these two Gentiles who have put their trust in Jesus.

Secondly, we see her faith was clearly in Jesus. And so we talk about what is true faith. True faith is a faith that's truly and clearly in Jesus. We've said already she calls him the son of David.

She calls him Lord, which is a generic term for master, but also can have some reference to God. At least three times in this passage she refers to him as her Lord. She knew who Jesus was, even though she was a Canaanite.

[21:06] To call him the son of David as I've said already means that she understands to some extent he's the fulfillment of the covenant. He's the Messiah that had been promised to the Israelites. And just think of how amazing that is in light of the Pharisees have completely missed it.

Even his disciples are not yet fully embracing it but this woman's saying you're the son of David. So she knew who Jesus was, she believed that he could help her, and then she put her trust, her confidence in him.

I think really in those points we see the nature of what true faith is. This is true faith. To know who Jesus is, to believe that he's able to save us, and then to put our full confidence in him.

Not in anything that we do, not in our works or our goodness, but our hope, our trust is solely in Jesus. And so, this whole encounter has demonstrated that to her. Her daughter's not well.

Her daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. Who can make that right? Who can heal her? She had nowhere else to go but to Jesus.

[22:18] And so, she fully trusts you're the only one that can do it. And here we have a similar picture for us spiritually. We have a problem. We're severely oppressed by sin.

We are sinners. We are deserving of eternal damnation, of hell. Where can we go for salvation? Do we know that Jesus is the son of God, the Messiah, the one who's come to die for our sins? Do we know that, first off? Do we believe that he's the only one that can save us from those sins? And then, are we trusting in him? Have we placed our full confidence in him? And so, that's really the nature of faith that we see in her.

And I think that's why Jesus commends her for these things. She knows who he is. She trusts in him as the only way that she can find healing for her daughter. And she places her full confidence in him to do it.

So, saving faith acknowledges Jesus Christ as the son of God and savior of sinners and as Lord and Messiah and then places all its trust in him and in him alone.

[23 : 26] Next, she appealed to Jesus solely on the basis of his mercy. She doesn't go to Jesus talking about how great she is. In fact, that's part of the point of this whole passage, right? The Pharisees might have come on their own righteousness.

Look, we keep the law. Even better than your disciples keep the law. But this woman has nothing to commend her. She's a Gentile dog. She knows this to be true.

In fact, when Jesus says this about her being a Gentile dog, she doesn't deny it. She says, yes, Lord. She admits it. She realizes there's nothing that ought to commend her. When she first goes to him, her words are, have mercy on me, oh Lord, son of David.

Her cry to Jesus is for mercy. Mercy. Mercy is not something we earn. Mercy is not a wage that's paid to us. Mercy is a free gift and she's coming to Jesus on that kind of basis that Jesus can give to her not based on her deserving but based on his character, his goodness, his mercy.

As I said, when she is called a dog, she acknowledges it. I think this too is true faith in how all must come to Jesus. Jesus, we come acknowledging there's nothing good in us.

[24 : 41] There's nothing that makes us deserving of salvation. There's nothing that commends us to God or makes God somehow owing us eternal life. We must lay aside our self-righteousness.

We must lay aside all our deserving, all our entitlement and come to Jesus just as this woman does as a beggar knowing that we don't deserve his mercy.

Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 says, For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no man may boast.

So salvation is never something that any man may boast about. Undoubtedly, there probably are men who have, but if we rightly understand what salvation is, no one can boast.

And the way we come to God, this example of true faith, why Jesus would call her faith a great faith is because she knew she was undeserving of salvation. She knew that she needed a savior and she comes to him in that way.

[25 : 48] I think Jesus' words, going back to what we saw in our last point, Jesus' words actually make her faith more evident as it shows that she's trusting solely in him and not in herself.

His words are meant to show to us that she didn't believe herself to be worthy of this and yet God saves her. And then finally on this point I would say the other note about true faith is that she's persistent.

And we could say, broaden that out and say, true faith is persistent. After her initial plea and Jesus doesn't even answer her, he doesn't say a word to her, you ever talk to someone and they act like you don't exist, they ignore you, that's discouraging.

It doesn't encourage you to persist in talking to them. But even after Jesus says nothing to her, she kept on crying out, we see in verse 23. She's following the disciples, we see the continuous action, for she is crying out after us.

It's continual. She kept on crying out after them to the point that they're annoyed by her. Jesus, send her away. In verse 25, we see that she came and knelt before him.

[26 : 59] So we have this picture, she asks Jesus a question, Jesus doesn't say a word to her, he ignores her. She follows after the disciples and after Jesus crying out, have mercy on me, have mercy on me.

And the disciples say to Jesus, send her away. Jesus' response is, I wasn't sent, but to the house of Israel. Again, another thing to discourage her. And then she goes in front of them and she kneels down before Jesus, begging, have mercy on me.

Jesus' words even about the Gentile dogs doesn't discourage her. And in fact, her response is such a great example of faith.

Yes, Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table. She wasn't willing to give up.

She's going to pursue Jesus. Even begging, just give me a crumb. I know the blessings meant for Israel, but a crumb from your table filled with me, it'd be enough. I mean, what dependence upon Christ is this?

[28 : 02] I just need a little bit. That's all it will take for you to heal my daughter. And so she goes and she pleads and she begs. And again, we see more about the nature of true faith.

I think really we see in this an example of what we saw in the parable that Jesus gave about the kingdom of heaven. With the parable of the pearl of great price and the parable of the treasure that was hidden in the field.

That merchant that found the pearl of great price would have sold all he had that he could get that pearl and the man who found the treasure in the field sold all that he had that he may buy that field and have that treasure. And the idea is that when we really understand who Christ is we don't let anything stand in our way.

There are no barriers for us. We would give up everything if we can have but Christ. And that's exactly what we see this woman doing. And why I think her faith is commended. This is what true faith is.

Whatever the barriers are we give them up we break them down that we might go to Christ. Nothing can keep us from this. There's no peace there's no rest until they in the parable or she in this instance have obtained what they sought.

[29 : 10] And so it ought to be true of us as well in terms of salvation. When we rightly understand who Jesus is we understand that he's the only one that can fix the problems that we have in our heart that can heal us that can save us from our sins then we go to him crying out putting our full trust in him and nothing's going to stop us because there's nowhere else we can go.

So what does this mean for us? I want to make just a few closing points in application. First I think this will encourage us that faith can be found in the most unlikely of places.

J.C. Ryle said it is grace not place that makes people believers. If we understand place not to be physical location but in terms of their position in life then we can rightly understand that it's grace and not place that makes people believers.

It's God's work that saves someone. We don't have any magical way of knowing who's going to be saved. Who has God chosen to save? Who's worthy of being saved?

Although I think often times we fall into those kind of thoughts. We look at someone and we think they're so great a sinner that I'm not even going to give them the gospel.

[30 : 28] Yeah, I don't think they, no, there's no way that they could ever believe what I'm saying. And even though we may affirm that salvation is by the sovereignty of God, don't we sometimes think of it in terms of what we have to do?

Well, they're not going to believe my message or, you know, it's not enough to change them. Do we really believe in the power, the efficacy of the gospel not based in us but in the power of God?

For we know that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. And it's God who changes hearts. Think of the example of Paul as he's going in the midst of rounding up Christians to be put to death.

Jesus stops him dead in his tracks and saves him. If there are wagers going around in that day amongst the Christians of who is going to be top of the list to be saved, the odds would have been highest against Paul.

No one would have expected Paul in the Christian church and yet God saves him. And so likewise, the disciples, if they were to guess who was going to be saved, they might look to the religious leaders of that day. And Jesus says, no, they're being cast out because they're trusting in themselves.

[31 : 37] and though they look good on the outside, they're dead inside. But then we go to this woman. She's a Canaanite. She's got nothing to commend to her.

On the outside, she looks bad. But God has changed her heart. She has genuine faith. And so I think we're encouraged as well that faith isn't found where we might suspect it and it's often found where we would never suspect it.

And so we have to be careful not to somehow prejudice our presentation of the gospel. We don't ever want to believe that someone will never come to faith, that they're somehow beyond salvation.

Secondly, I want you to see that Jesus is, I start to say often, Jesus is always more compassionate than his followers. Now I say followers just to make clear that it's not just about disciples, is it? Jesus is more compassionate than Christians are today. We just have to acknowledge it. Jesus' disciples wanted him to send her away. They're annoyed by her. This woman's annoying to them and what they don't understand is that God's saving her.

[32 : 48] This is what Jesus is sending them to do, make disciples of all the nations. She's one of those and they would readily send her away. This woman comes to them, she's begging, she's pleading, her life is falling apart, her daughter whom she loves is seriously ill, in great condition, demon possessed, and the disciples' response is simply to ask the Lord to send her away.

And they say, Jesus, this woman's annoying us, can't you do something about it? What's more important than the state of her daughter or her soul is how annoyed I am. Do we ever feel like that sometimes?

We don't want to be inconvenienced with things? I think the same is true today. Christians are sinners too.

And we're always going to lack compassion to the level of Jesus Christ. Maybe sometimes we're going to be not very compassionate at all, but we're always going to lack compassion to the level of Jesus Christ.

So one way I want to encourage you today is if you're not a Christian, if you've ever had Christians who really disappointed you, who have sinned against you, who have said mean things, who have not been compassionate, who have viewed you in maybe a similar way to how the Jews viewed this woman as a Gentile dog, if you've ever experienced that, please don't let them discourage you.

[34 : 17] Sinners are, Christians are sinners too. And what we see here is that Jesus is compassionate. And I want to encourage you really, our standard is not how compassionate are Jesus' followers.

Because they sin and they fail. But how compassionate is Jesus Christ? And what we see is that Jesus is compassionate. And so thirdly, I want to encourage you that this ought to lead us to come to Jesus.

If we add these two things together, faith is often found where we wouldn't expect it, and Jesus is more compassionate than we can imagine. Then it ought to encourage us to come to Jesus.

Don't ever think that you're too sinful to come to Jesus, or that you're too righteous to come to Christ. Both can be true. There may be people who are hearing this message today that think that, look, I'm just too bad.

There's no way Jesus would save me. And what we see is that Jesus is compassionate, and that he does save even those who are unworthy, because we're all unworthy.

[35 : 22] There's none of us who are good enough to come to Jesus. So every time that someone's saved, it's always an act of mercy. It's always an act of God's compassion, and he's compassionate.

But secondly, let's not believe that we're too righteous to come to Christ. If we think we're too good, what we need to realize is that none of us are deserving of salvation.

If we come to Jesus as beggars, if we come to him acknowledging we've got nothing, but we're solely leaning on Jesus Christ, then we can be saved too. And so let's not be discouraged that none can come.

If you can allow me to use this in a way that I think Jesus did, if Gentile dogs can come to him, then all of us can come. John 6, 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

There's no one that Jesus is going to cast out who comes to him. And so I encourage you to come to Christ today and know that you're not going to be cast out. And then I want to encourage you to especially come to Jesus if you're hurting or if you're in trouble.

[36 : 32] Really, it's perhaps a situation with the woman's daughter that drives her to come to Jesus. Maybe she would have stayed at home even knowing Jesus was in her area if it wasn't for this great need that she has.

And I think, what is the reality of all of us today? Aren't there ways in which we're all needy? I think even the state of the world right now, with quarantines all over, a stay-at-home order in our state right now.

Aren't we all needy? Here's what God's word tells us. Matthew 11, 28. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Where are we going to go for rest? Where are we going to go for salvation and deliverance? I want to encourage you to go to Jesus Christ. And really, that leads to my fourth point, which is God uses these earthly infirmities to draw us to himself.

The demon possession of this woman's daughter was God's instrument to bring her into the kingdom of heaven. She had not had a sick daughter, a demon-possessed daughter. She might have been tempted to look somewhere else for her security, for her satisfaction, for her aid in life.

[37 : 41] And so we, too, must understand affliction in this way. God uses our afflictions, our trouble, our suffering to drive us to Jesus Christ, to bring us to salvation.

Are you afflicted today? As I was saying earlier, in some way we all are with what's going on with the virus right now. But maybe some of you are experiencing even deeper affliction than that. Suffering, hurt, pain.

Consider for a moment, is this God's tool to use in your life to bring you to Jesus Christ? To put your trust in him, to know that we're not in control. I think if anything this virus has taught us, it's that we're not in control.

The government's not in control. We can't handle things. When God sends plague, when he sends natural disasters, hurricanes, tsunamis, who are we to stop that?

But so too, it's true with so many things in our life that we think we're in control of. It's not until God relinquishes the control from our hands that we realize we were never in control.

[38 : 50] We were always in need of Christ. And so let me encourage you today that maybe God's using those things in your life to bring you to him. And I encourage you to put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Like the Canaanite woman, there's nowhere else for us to go to salvation but to go to Jesus Christ. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we also thank you for your word.

And Lord, though the words here seem harsh, we pray that you'd help us to understand them and to know that the same is true of us. That in many ways, we're no better than dogs.

We're unclean. We're defiled inside, apart from the work of your spirit in our hearts. And so we pray asking that for those who hear this message that your spirit would work in our hearts. Lord, we thank you of your word and we're encouraged.

We give thanks to you, O Lord. For though you were angry with us, your anger turned away that you might comfort us. And that is exactly what you've done in the person of Jesus Christ. You poured out your anger, your wrath against our sin upon him that we might know forgiveness and salvation.

[39 : 56] And we pray that for all those who hear this message that they would come to him, that they'd put their trust in him. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning.