

CLOSE-UPS OF JESUS THROUGH THE LENS OF MARK - Part thirteen

Wednesday, September 16th, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket ON

1) - **THE FAITH OF THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN – MARK 7:24-30**

“And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. [25] But immediately a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. [26] Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. [27] And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." [28] But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." [29] And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." [30] And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.”

This incident has more impact when we look at the background information on **Tyre and Sidon (24)**. The godlessness of these cities is marked out in **Joel 3:4-6** - “**What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily. [5] For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. [6] You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border.**”

Also, Matthew identifies this woman as a woman of **Canaan (Matthew 15:22)**. The Jews would have strong feelings about the Cannanites - and not without reason (**see Deuteronomy 7:1-6**). It was a shocking turn of events that Jesus would actually leave the region of the Jews and minister His love and grace to these people. ***This woman seemed to have everything against her.***

A) **NOTICE HOW JESUS SEEMS TO TEST HER WITH HIS WORDS - MARK 7:27**

“And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." Jesus knows her background. He knows how easy it would be for her to ***disqualify herself*** from receiving His help. Would she let these barriers stand in her way? Jesus, knowing her heart, actually increases her faith and determination with his seemingly harsh statements. Her faith is exercised with each jump He forces her to make.

B) **JESUS SPECIFICALLY SAYS HER WORDS (RESPONSES) WERE SUCH THAT SHE WOULD BE BLESSED - MARK 7:29**

“And he said to her, ‘For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.’” That is, this was the kind of response He had been looking to draw out from her all along. It

is always important to understand that ***behind the scenes*** there may be an element of ***timing and testing*** in the answers to our prayers. To quit with first attempts is wrong.

C) **JESUS REWARDS HER FAITH TO REACH OUT ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE - EVEN WHEN THE DAUGHTER WASN'T PRESENT WITH JESUS - MARK 7:24-25, 30**

“And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. [25] But immediately a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet....30....And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.” Did Jesus know that this little girl was in need of His ministry ***before*** the mother came with her request? Why didn't He just heal that little girl before the mother came? God seems to work through the means of ***prayer***, through the faith, persistence and devotion of others. How many people never receive His ministry because we don't intercede for them? There's much food for thought here.

2) **THE GENUINE COMPASSION OF JESUS' HEALING MINISTRY – MARK 7:31-37**

“Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. [32] And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. [33] And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. [34] And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." [35] And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. [36] And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. [37] And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

We can see so clearly that He didn't perform miracles as crowd catchers or stunts for publicity. He takes this poor person ***away from the spectators*** (33). How many evangelists work like this today? He is sensitive to the feelings of the needy. He cares for you and me as much when we're alone as when we're in the sanctuary.

3) **THE CAUSE AND CURE OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS – MARK 8:1-21**

This passage is very similar to the feeding of the five thousand in **Mark 6:32-44**. It's amazing that the disciples could even ask the question they ask in **8:4** - **“And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?”** You can't help but feel that they should have been able to see what was coming.

The important point for all of us is that spiritual blindness is ***usually not seen in those whom it is affecting***. Also, it is ***stubborn and recurring***. It is not something that can be totally dealt with finally and in one shot. We

need to be constantly sharpening our spiritual senses and appetites. The **feeding of the five thousand** is followed by Christ's warning in **6:51-52** - **"And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, [52] for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."** In the very same way, this miracle is followed by the same warning about blindness again in **8:17-21** - **"And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? [18] Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? [19] When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." [20] "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." [21] And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"**

Notice what happened in this passage:

A) THE DISCIPLES ARE STILL SLOW TO EXERCISE FAITH IN THE POWER OF JESUS - 8:4

"And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" It's **not** that they have seen no proof. It's that they habitually and automatically respond to life from a naturalistic, earthly mind-set. What they have seen hasn't yet trained them to think spiritually.

B) IMMEDIATELY UPON RETURNING TO JEWISH TERRITORY, JESUS IS HOUNDED BY THE PHARISEES TO ONCE AGAIN PERFORM ANOTHER SIGN – MARK 8:11

"The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. This request is said to actually **weary Jesus (12)** because He knows that they will never submit to Him regardless of how many miracles He performs.

C) JESUS WARNS HIS OWN DISCIPLES THAT THE BLIND, CLOSED-MINDED THINKING OF THE PHARISEES IS CONTAGIOUS – MARK 8:15-21

"And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." [16] And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. [17] And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? [18] Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? [19] When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." [20] "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." [21] And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?" Actually, what Jesus is saying here is only a restating of the last words

of the parable of the soils in Mark 4:24-25.

Here's the application to our lives. If we do not put forth an **energetic effort** to influence our lives by what we have already received of the light from Jesus and His word, the truth will lose its power over our minds. We don't learn spiritual lessons without repetition and effort. Spiritual learning is the hardest form of learning.

D) **THIS CONDITION IS DEALT WITH IN JAMES 1:21-25**

“Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.[22] But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. [23] For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. [24] For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. [25] But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

Most of us think that the answer to our problems is more light - more signs. If only we had more proof we would find faith so much simpler. James says our problem isn't a shortage of information or evidence. It's **thoughtlessness** of spiritual things. The answer is not only to hear them, but to **plant, water and "engraft" them**. And that takes learning, praying, obedience, and repetition over long periods of time.