

**INTRO:** Good morning and thank you for watching. Turn your Bibles or turn them on to MATTHEW 15.

To say this has been a difficult week, is a colossal understatement! Personally, I have been pushed to my limit physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I have been told "you can't" so many times this week, that I have found myself fretful to the point that I can hardly contain myself. But just yesterday, I was reminded that, I needed to cast all my care on the Lord, and let Him care for me...and this congregation. That I can't lean on my own understanding and wisdom, but that I should lean into Him. He is my sustainer. He is my source. He is my very present help in a time of trouble.

With that reminder, I started looking to the Word. In Matthew 15, we have a story about a woman who came to Jesus in such a way that He couldn't help but bless her. She demonstrated a faith so great that Jesus gave to her her request. She came to Him distraught. She left rejoicing!

Maybe your week has been similar to mine. Maybe you have wondered, more than a time or two, if God really cares about what you're going through. Well, let me tell you, HE DOES CARE! And not only does He care, He is very able to provide a way out of your heartache, and bring you to a place of rejoicing as well.

Let's look at our passage for a moment, and let the Word of God introduce us to an unnamed woman who touched the heart of God with her faith. NOTICE SHE WAS...

**I) DESPERATE:** vv 21-22 *"Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely."*

The story doesn't begin with us knowing about this woman's great faith; it begins in desperation, where great faith often begins.

The Canaanite woman, whose name we never hear, has a daughter whom she describes as "cruelly possessed by a demon." We don't know exactly what this meant, but it easily could have meant she was afflicted with violently insane behavior, like the man who lived among the tombs in Matthew 8, or that she had terrible seizures, like the boy who often fell into the fire in Matthew 17.

Whatever her symptoms, her mother was desperate for her to be healed - to be free from this terrible state. Her desperation led to hope - not hope in the folk cures and remedies of the day. She had probably tried all of them, but to no avail. On this particular day she heard that Jesus was passing through town, and she put her hope in the God of Israel, hope in the Messiah, God's Chosen One.

This hope led to a faith without shame. Many times we can be afraid to let our faith be known. Sometimes we don't want to stand out; sometimes we just want to be polite and not "talk religion." Sometimes we just don't want the added scrutiny that comes when people realize we're followers of Jesus Christ. But sometimes we have no other choice.

**I) DESPERATE:** vv 21-22 CONTINUED This woman was at the end of her rope, so to speak. She had not other options. She approached this band of disciples and their leader, Jesus. She screamed out to them from a distance, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!" She didn't just call out, she screamed, she pleaded loudly - her cry is as desperate as the faith she had that Jesus was the One who could make a difference.

She didn't care that the disciples didn't approve. She didn't care, even as a woman approaching men who were strangers, that she would stand out like a sore thumb. She didn't care about the things that often make us ashamed. She had the faith of a desperate mother - a faith without shame.

This should make us think about our faith. Does it come out of desperation? Does our faith rise out of a confidence that Jesus is the only One who can bring meaning to our lives, the only One who can bring true spiritual and emotional healing, the only One to whom our lives are worth devoting? Or, is our faith just a casual thing we do because it's expected? The Canaanite woman's faith was without shame because she knew Jesus was her only hope and she didn't care what others expected.

**E. Stanley Jones** "Faith is not merely your holding on to God—it is God holding on to you."

NOTICE SECONDLY, SHE WAS...

**II) DETERMINED:** vv 23-25 *"But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. "Tell her to go away," they said. "She is bothering us with all her begging." 24 Then Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel." 25 But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, "Lord, help me!"*

She cried out, but Jesus didn't say a word - complete silence. She went to Him and made her plea and "He answered her not a word." He ignored her. WHAT!!!!? Jesus knows what we don't. He knew what her reaction would be. He knew that she had faith. He was waiting for her faith to find full expression.

Some of the greatest lessons of faith are learned when God appears to be silent when we are desperate. Over and over the woman cried out to Jesus for mercy. But He did not answer her, not even a word. Not one word of acknowledgment was uttered. Not even a "Not now," "I'll speak with you later," "I hear you, let Me think on it," was said. Nothing but divine silence met the pleas and cries.

All of us want to be listened to when we speak. Nothing can spark anger in us quicker than to feel snubbed by a relative or a friend when we are speaking. Even if someone does not agree with what we say we at least want to be acknowledged! Yet here was a lady that felt in the depths of her own soul the desperation of her daughter's demon possession, and in her crying out to Jesus Christ she found only silence.

Why was Jesus silent to her pleas? His silence tried her faith, but did not conquer it; she pleaded still. The Lord responded the way He did to her, not to destroy her faith, but to develop it. He had a purpose in His silence. The effect was to develop, strengthen, and manifest her faith. His silence was not without purpose, and certainly not out of unconcern for this woman's need. She was not discouraged to the point of giving up by our Lord's seeming denial. She waited and held on, believingly.

**I) DESPERATE:** vv 21-22

**II) DETERMINED:** vv 23-25 **CONTINUED** At this point, the disciples (and many of us) get a little uncomfortable. They shuffle their feet a little, finally speak up and say, "Jesus, umm...maybe You could just heal her daughter and she would leave us alone. You know, it's actually embarrassing us to see her acting like this, and You know what people will say seeing her following us around." To this Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." How do you think they would have responded? Would they have been as shocked as we are that Jesus said this? Or would they have been thinking this: "Well, yeah Jesus...we don't like Canaanites either, but she's driving us crazy."

We then see something more about her faith. Not only does she have faith without shame, but her faith was without fear. She was not afraid of Jesus or the disciples. She threw herself down at Jesus' feet in total worship. With nothing to lose, she showed a relentless, reckless dependence on Jesus. Without shame and without fear, she fell at Jesus' feet and asked again, "Lord, help me." Is this the kind of utter devotion we have, or are we afraid to pray and ask God something because we might be told no? This woman didn't let Jesus' lack of response stop her.

"Little faith will bring your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul."

**III) DELIGHTED:** vv 26-28 *"Jesus responded, "It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs." 27 She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their master's table." 28 "Dear woman," Jesus said to her, "your faith is great. Your request is granted." And her daughter was instantly healed."*

On top of a faith without shame or fear, she showed a faith without end, a faith that wouldn't quit. As she bowed down at Jesus' feet, He told her something very strange. He said, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Everyone there knew what Jesus meant, the disciples and the woman. He was saying in effect: It isn't good to take the blessing meant for Israel and give it to the Gentiles. The woman said, "Jesus, master, as always You're right, but even the dogs eat from the crumbs that fall off the master's table." In other words, on her face in worship at the feet of Jesus the woman said, "Lord, I know Your blessings are for the entire world. I know Your blessing is so great that I'll gladly take the leftovers and be satisfied." At this final response from the woman whose faith wouldn't quit, Jesus' serious face broke into a smile; He reached down, took her by the hands, helped her to her feet, looked her in the eye and said, "Great is your faith woman, your daughter is healed!" WOW, what a moment!

**GREAT FAITH IS ALWAYS REWARDED WITH GREAT DELIGHT?**

**CONCLUSION:** This is where this particular story ends. We don't know what the disciples were thinking. Did Jesus remind them of what He previously taught? In chapter 7, Matthew wrote, "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." Here, from one they never would have expected, the disciples saw this kind of faith lived out. They got a living lesson on asking, seeking, and knocking. They saw great faith embodied, a faith that didn't quit with asking, a faith that wasn't ashamed to seek diligently after Jesus, a faith that wasn't afraid to keep knocking even in the face of no response.

Do we have a faith that won't quit, or do we have a faith that gives up when we don't see a quick response? The disciples left that place after having seen a faith that wouldn't quit, a faith they imitated as they spread the gospel later on in the face of persecution.