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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Faith of a Canaanite Matt 15:21-28

Lesson Background and Introduction

The Gospel of Matthew does not explicitly identify its author. The early church, however, attributed authorship to Matthew, a tax collector who became one of the apostles (Matthew 9:9; 10:3). Other Gospels mention this person by his given name: Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27-28), named after one of the sons of Jacob (see Genesis 29:34; 35:23). As a tax collector, Matthew worked with the foreign occupiers of Palestine: the Romans. During the first century AD, tax collectors were despised by their fellow countrymen (example: Luke 18:11). They were seen as traitors to the Jewish people because they assisted the Romans in taking tax money. They were also held in low regard because they frequently enriched themselves at the expense of others (example: 19:2, 8). The only other information we have about this apostle is that he was the “son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14). The apostle James was also the “son of Alphaeus” (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). These two may have been brothers, but none of the Gospels make that relationship apparent like they do with other sets of brothers (Matthew 4:21; 10:2; Mark 1:19). Matthew’s Gospel contains the most quotations from the Old Testament of the four Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew has about 65 Old Testament quotes; Mark has about 30; Luke has about 26, and John has about 16. As such, students frequently call Matthew the “most Jewish” of the four Gospels. It is thought that Matthew intended his Gospel to be received by a primarily Jewish audience. Although this Gospel emphasized the Jewish context of Jesus’s ministry (see Matthew 10:6; 15:24), its message reveals that the gospel of Jesus Christ was intended for both Jew and Gentile. Matthew is the only Gospel to record the visit of the Gentile Magi (2:1-12). It is also the only one to include Jesus’ commission to his disciples that they “make disciples of all nations” (28:16-20). The events leading to today’s Scripture reveal the intended expansion of the gospel message. As Jesus’ ministry in Galilee drew to a close, it became evident that his people would reject him and his mission (see Matthew 13:53-58). His disciples displayed little faith regarding his identity (see 14:22-32). They also failed to understand his teaching (15:12-20). Even the religious leaders were offended by Jesus’ message (15:1-9). The people most expected to accept Jesus and his mission failed to understand. Mark 7:24-30 is a parallel account of Matthew 15:21-28.

The woman in today’s text was the ultimate “outsider” to a first-century Jewish audience. She was aware of the biases against her. The deck would be stacked against her if she approached a Jewish teacher. Despite that awareness, she came to Jesus anyway. Her desperate situation, and her suffering daughter, necessitated a bold response. The woman’s behavior revealed a persistent and great faith. As a result, she received mercy from the Son of David. She was considered an “outsider” to some people, but she was an “insider” because of her life of faith. This Scripture invites us to desire a life of great faith. What blessings do we fail to receive because we limit or misplace our faith? A life of great faith requires steadfast confidence that God will show mercy to everyone. How does your perspective need to change in this regard?

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

We too are invited to approach Jesus with bold persistence. As we keep asking, seeking, and knocking, we will find grace and mercy in our time of need

POEM FOR THE WEEK:

Something happens when we pray
Take our place and therein stay,
Wrestle on till break of day;
Ever let us pray. —Anon.

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour
(Matt 15:28 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", May 03, 2007)

Series: Examining Our Faith

UNIT 3: The Measure of Faith

NEXT WEEK

Justified by Faith
(Rom 3:21-30)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

The Need (Matt 15:21-22)

The need for mercy

- Because of being a sinner (Luke 18:13)
- Because mercy is part of God's plan (Rom 11:32)
- Because God's power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9)
- Because God provides mercy in our time of need (Heb 4:16)
- Because once we were not one of God's people (1 Pet 2:10)
- Because God is the only source of mercy (Ps 146:3-5)

The need of deliverance from attacks by Satan

- We need deliverance because Satan is looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8)
- We need deliverance because Satan is an accuser (Zech 3:1-2)
- We need deliverance because Satan wants to sift us like wheat (Luke 22:31-32)
- We need deliverance because Satan knows his time is short (Rev 12:12)
- We need deliverance because Satan is our enemy and we must fight him every day (Eph 6:11-12)
- We need deliverance because the influences of Satan is always at war within us (Rom 7:23)

The Denial of Help (Matt 15:23-24)

Denial through negative answers to petitions

- Negative answer because God knows what's best for us (2 Cor 12:8)
- Negative answer because sometimes it is the consequence of our sins (2 Sam 12:16)
- Negative answer because sometimes it takes more spiritual power (Mark 9:29)
- Negative answer because we don't know what to pray for (Rom 8:26)
- Negative answer because we have the wrong motives (James 4:2-3)

Denial through bad advice from others

- Bad advice from friends (1 King 12:8)
- Bad advice from sinners (Prov 1:10-16)
- Bad advice from those who gossip (Prov 20:19)
- Bad advice from those whose desire it is to cause division (Rom 16:17)
- Bad advice from bad company (1 Cor 15:33)
- Bad advice from those whose desire it is to deceive (Eph 5:6)

Denial through not finding applicability

- Wrong applicability of spiritual power (Acts 8:18-20)
- Wrong applicability of using human reasoning and not obeying God's word (1 King 13:15-24)
- Wrong applicability of the reason for difficulties (2 Cor 12:8-9)
- Wrong applicability of what to pray for (1 John 5:16)
- Wrong applicability based on our spiritual condition (Isa 1:15-16)
- Wrong applicability of allowing our lustful desires to rule our life (James 4:2-3)

The Persistence (Matt 15:25-28)

Persist in knowing that Jesus is the only help

- Jesus is our only help because He is the only one who has the words of eternal life (John 6:67-68)
- Jesus is our only help because He is the only one who has the power and guidance we need (Ps 73:24-26)
- Jesus is our only help because He is the only one who can provide salvation (Acts 4:12)
- Jesus is our only help because He is the way, truth and life (John 14:6)
- Jesus is our only help because He is the only mediator between God and us (1 Tim 2:5)

Persist by acknowledging unworthiness

- We are unworthy because we sometimes put others before God (Matt 10:37)
- We are unworthy because Jesus is so much more holy and powerful than we are (Luke 3:16)
- We are unworthy because of our sin (Luke 15:21)
- We are unworthy because God loved us when we were His enemy (Rom 5:8)

Persist by realizing that even the crumbs from Jesus is worth more than possessions and wealth

- Because our life is worthless without Jesus (Acts 20:24)
- Because nothing can be compared to the glory that Jesus can provide (Rom 8:18)
- Because our faith is worth more than any worldly wealth (1 Pet 1:7)
- Because there is greatness in the knowledge of Jesus (Phil 3:8)