

SM028 – Crumbs from the Master’s Table

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The stories of Jesus have reached into the hearts of millions. They have changed people, families, and nations. Not all have loved the stories Jesus told. Not all have honored the life He lived. Some were angry with Him, the things He did and the things He said. Others were deeply moved and found hope. What will your response be?

Today on Stories of the Master, Crumbs from the Master’s Table. This story is from Mark 7:24-30-23 and Matthew 15:21-28. I hope you will follow along in your Bible.

My name is Jonathan, and I will be your Storyteller and Teacher.

I’m so glad you’re here. Gather your friends. Come close and listen. It’s time for the world to hear again the stories of the Master.

And now, Crumbs from the Master’s Table.

SM028 – Crumbs from the Master’s Table

Pressure was coming from every quarter. The political leaders of the land had heard of Jesus and his mighty works of power and were suspicious of his motives. The religious leaders had sent delegations to question him and found his activities scandalous and dangerous. They believed he was leading the people astray. His family members at times thought he had lost his mind. The crowds wanted to crown him as their king but their kind of kingdom was different from the kind of kingdom God wanted. And often even his own disciples did not fully understand his mission. Yes, pressure was coming from every quarter and it was time to take a break.

Jesus and his disciples had tried to take a break several days previous to this. The disciples had just returned from their own preaching tour and needed a break. They got into a boat and sailed to a spot on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where they thought no one would be, but word got out about their destination and they were greeted by thousands! Jesus, graciously, spent time with them, teaching, healing, and feeding the thousands. But it was time to get away again. And this time, Jesus and the disciples did something they rarely did, they left the border of Israel.

They went northwest from Galilee of Israel and went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, the land of the Phoenicians and Syrians. This was a hilly area where few people lived and the prospect for some days of rest and quiet seemed almost certain.

The land of the Phoenicians and Syrians had played a role in the history of God’s people. When King David built a palace for himself, he used workers from this area who were experts in wood, and the wood from this area was some of the best in world. Solomon used them in the building of the great temple. This was a wealthy land and the people of this region had been a great sea power for centuries, trading with other nations, and even colonizing distant lands. Now, in the time of Jesus it was inhabited

by many sophisticated Greek people and they were aligned with Roman imperial policy. Rome was the new power and Rome afforded protection for their land and wealth.

But it was also a land of great spiritual darkness and need. Rome could give military protection. The Greeks could bring their wealth and philosophy, but neither could satisfy the hunger of men's hearts for a relationship with the true God. And neither could provide solutions for the deep spiritual needs of the people. In this land lived a woman and her daughter. We are not told if this woman was married, a single mother, or was a widow, or was divorced. But we do know she had a child, a daughter, and something was wrong with her little girl. The woman believed she was afflicted with an evil spirit. We are not told what this spirit did to the child, but only that whatever it was caused great suffering for the child.

This woman had heard about Jesus. This is not surprising. Even though Jesus confined his work to Israel, news about his healing power spread far beyond the borders of Israel. Matthew tells us that the news about Jesus had spread throughout all Syria; and that people brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them." As people would return to their homes with great joy they would also return with the news of this great man who had power and compassion for everyone.

For some reason the woman had never been able to travel to see this Jesus. But then one day she heard something that brought hope to her troubled heart – Jesus was in the area! Jesus had come to her land! And so the woman set off at once to find where Jesus was.

If, somehow, we could see this picture from above, we would see a woman travelling in one direction and she is looking for Jesus. Jesus is travelling toward her but he is looking for privacy and quiet. A woman is travelling with great need in her heart – she is burdened for her daughter who is afflicted with an evil spirit. Jesus is travelling with great need in his heart – he is burdened for the world but he also needs time to rest and find refreshment for the great work that was ahead of him. And their paths would soon meet in one of the greatest stories of faith ever told.

Jesus and his disciples enter a small village. They make some inquiries and find a home that they can use for a few days. Jesus enters the house and he tells his disciples, "Please, don't let anyone know that I am here."

But the woman is in the same village and she is asking everyone, "Please, I am looking for Jesus. I have heard that he is here. This is Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee. He is the one who has healing power. Do you know where he is?" Finally the woman comes across the people who are letting Jesus use their home for a few days and they say, "Yes, he is using our home – look, just down at the end of the street. You can see some of his followers standing outside the home. In fact, I think Jesus has just come outside to speak with them. But I don't think he wants to be disturbed, I think ..."

But the woman did not hear the man. She immediately set off as fast as she could for the home and when she saw Jesus she immediately started crying out, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David, my daughter is cruelly afflicted with an evil spirit. Jesus, please, help me. My daughter is so sick."

But Jesus doesn't say a word. He just continues looking at the woman in her pitiful state as she continues crying and asking for mercy with a loud voice.

The disciples cannot believe they have been discovered again. Was this going to be like the Sea of Galilee where they tried to get away for a few days of rest only to find thousands of people waiting for them? This was only one person but she was making so much noise, others would hear her and their would soon be a crowd.

Some of Jesus' disciples came to him and said, "Master, send her away. You sent the crowds away. This is just one woman. Send her away. Look down the street, people can hear her and soon the whole village will know you are here. Lord, heal her daughter and send her away and then get back in the house. Do something before this time is ruined too!"

But Jesus said to his disciples. "You want me to heal her just to quiet her and then send her away? No, I will not. Besides, in the ministry that my Father has given me for this time, I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. This woman is not of Israel. It is not yet time for the others."

But the woman had overheard what Jesus said and she came right up to him and fell at his feet and said, "Jesus, please, help me. Lord, help me!"

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, when a family prepares a meal, do they take the food and share it with the little puppies that are around the house, or do they feed their children first? It is not good to take away the food that belongs to the children."

But the woman said, "Yes, Lord, that is true. But sometimes, the little dogs are under the table, and when crumbs of food fall from the table while everyone is eating, the little dogs eat those crumbs and they are satisfied."

A huge smile broke out on the face of Jesus and his heart filled with joy. He closed his eyes – saw where the little girl was and saw the spirit that afflicted her and in his heart he said, "Be gone." And immediately the evil spirit left the little girl.

Then he said to the woman, "O woman, because of your answer, the demon has gone out of your daughter." And the woman stood up, wiped the tears from her face and walked away and when she returned to her home, she found her child resting upon her bed with a look of peace upon her sweet face, for the demon had gone, never to return.

There is so much to learn from this story. Why did Jesus say he was sent only to Israel? Was he not sent for the whole world? Why did Jesus say that he did not want to give food to the dogs? Was he calling the woman, or the woman's child a dog? And then, why did he immediately heal the woman's daughter?

When we come back, we'll learn the answers to these questions and learn a lesson that is important for everyone to hear.

Interlude

Hello everyone, this is Jonathan Williams the creator of and storyteller for Stories of the Master. The story we are looking at today is one that has puzzled people for many years and when we return we will find the answers to the questions we have asked. It is an answer you cannot afford to miss.

Stories of the Master is a ministry of Word of God, Speak where we teach the truth of God's word to a Stories of the Master is a ministry of Word of God, Speak where we retell the Story of Jesus and the stories He told to the whole world. We help you connect to the Story of God, to build a biblical worldview, and to advance change in your life. As you listen, it is our hope that you will want to learn more about this man Jesus, His stories, His life, and what He came to do.

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Jesus' plans to get away and have some rest from his strenuous schedule did not work out. No, there weren't 5000 people waiting for him, but there was a woman who found him and her loud voice as she begged for help would soon have the village at his doorstep. But Jesus acted, not because of her loud cries for help. He acted for her because of something she said that deeply moved his heart.

Let's get back to our story and see why Jesus healed this woman's daughter.

Part 2

Why did Jesus heal the woman's daughter when there seemed to be so many obstacles put in her path? Let's look at all the obstacles the woman had to overcome.

First, Jesus was in her village, but he did not come to teach, to feed people, or even to heal. He came for some much needed rest. She wanted help. He was there for quiet and rest.

Second, when the woman first started crying out, Jesus did not say a word. He did not immediately heal the girl but he kept quiet, reminding us that sometimes God is silent to us. But his silence is never a sign that he does not love and is not concerned.

Third, Jesus' disciples wanted to send her away. There wasn't much love coming from these men. They had learned many lessons but they still had much to learn about ministry to people. But the attitude of the disciples did not stop the woman. She persevered and stayed right there.

Fourth, Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." What did Jesus mean? Did he not care for the gentiles as well as the Jews? Had he not come for the whole world? He had indeed

come for the whole world, but first, he had to come for Israel because the prophecies said that first Israel must be saved, then the message of salvation would go to the whole world through a restored Israel. When the woman heard that, she knew she was not of Israel. But she did not leave. She had to have the blessing of God in her life.

Fifth, when the woman came and knelt before him, like a little lost puppy, whimpering for her sad state and that of her daughter, Jesus said it was not good to take the children's bread and give it to little dogs. Some have thought that Jesus was insulting her. In that part of the world, at that time in history, dogs were mean scavengers and were not usually household pets. They roamed in packs and were considered unclean and dangerous. And if a household did have a dog as a pet, the dog would only receive the scraps from the dinners table after everyone had eaten.

Food was hard to come by for many people. There were not modern stores with brightly colored packages of food for dogs. The dogs ate the leftovers after everyone in the family had eaten. And sometimes, the dogs would sit under the table and on some lucky days some food would fall from the table and they were there to gobble it up.

As the woman thought on how children ate first, even in her own family, and then the dogs, she thought on the many times that dogs would sit under the table and on some lucky days some food would fall from the table and they were there to gobble it up.

But the woman thought on something else. She thought on Jesus and his greatness. Yes, it is true that it was not time for the Gentiles, but was not Jesus greater? She thought on how it was not yet time to feed the rest of the world but first he must feed his own people. But was not Jesus power great enough to provide for others even at this time? **If she could have just a crumb, just a small portion, that would be enough for her. She did not need a full meal, just a crumb would be enough and when the woman said this Jesus marveled and said that she had great faith.**

How many times had Jesus given a full meal to his own people yet they would not believe? How many times had Jesus shown great power to heal but Israel still would not believe? Yet here was a Gentile woman and all she needed was a crumb from the table, not even a full loaf of bread, just a crumb and she said that would be enough.

And when this gentile woman showed great faith, Jesus leaped over all the obstacles that had been set between him and the woman and healed her daughter. Yes, it was true that it was not time for the Gentiles, but Jesus gladly set that aside because there was a greater lesson for everyone to hear – the lesson of having faith in him.

This was a hard lesson for his people to learn. But strangely, gentiles and women and the blind, those in greatest need, often showed great faith. Remember the story of the Roman centurion who wanted Jesus to heal his servant? Jesus marveled at his faith and said, "I have not found such faith in all Israel!" Here was a Roman, a leader of a hundred soldiers who were the oppressors of his people, yet in this Roman, Jesus found faith.

Remember the woman who had the bleeding problem? She was a woman. She was unclean. But she was desperate for healing and while everyone else was touching Jesus, grabbing onto Jesus, wanting healing and receiving nothing, she touched the edge of his robes and immediately was healed and when Jesus stopped and had the woman come forward and tell everyone what she had done, he said to her, "Woman, your faith has healed you."

The edge of his robe, a crumb from his table. Healing is no problem for Jesus. It takes very little effort for him to heal, but whenever anyone showed great faith, Jesus was ready to show his power in their behalf. Jesus often healed without people showing faith. He did that because he was merciful to people, but what he was looking for among his people was faith. And whenever anyone showed faith, Jesus was ready to act. And when this woman showed her faith in Jesus, her daughter was immediately healed.

Why is faith so important to Jesus? It is because faith is a demonstration of a good relationship and faith shows the trustworthiness of the one in whom the faith is placed.

Think of your own relationships. Think of the people you trust and the people you don't trust. The ones that you do trust – why do you trust them? The ones that you do not trust – why do you not trust them? With whom do you have the best relationships? Who are the ones you keep at arms length, the ones you don't care for? Those questions all have easy answers to them. Trust-filled relationships are the relationships we all want.

And God wants to have a trust filled relationship with us. He wants us to realize that we can trust him. He does love us. He does have our best in mind. He will work out all things for good for those who love him. God does not want to be some religious figurehead in our minds. God does not want to be just a concept and someone we refer to once a week when we go to our services. God wants a trust-filled relationship with us. He wants us to trust him and he wants us to be trustworthy and to be open with him and to do what he wants us to do.

Second, faith shows the trustworthiness of the person in whom you are placing faith. If you place faith in someone you are declaring to the world that this person is trust-worthy. They are worthy of you placing your complete faith in them. And God wants us to have faith in him and show the world his trust-worthiness.

But there are other reasons why God wants faith from us. Only by faith can we have vision to see what God wants to make of us and only by faith can we move the mountains that stand in the path to doing God's will. Do you have mountains in your life? Do you have obstacles you cannot seem to get over? Think of this woman from the region of Syria and Phoenicia. Think of her troubles. Think of the obstacles she had to overcome and think of the persevering faith she had in Jesus, so strong, so persevering, that Jesus met her great faith with a great work of power for her daughter.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was seeking for trust-filled relationships and Jesus was seeking to build faith in his disciples. These men would need great faith to carry out the mission that he would send them on after he died and rose from the dead. Even though, during their years together in Israel, it was not time for the mission to the Gentiles, that time would come when he would send them out to all the

nations of the world and they would need great faith for their journeys. And so, during their time of ministry together, Jesus would point out to them the faith of others – like this woman, “O woman, your faith is great.” He would reprove them for their unbelief. Remember when Peter started walking on water, then took his eyes off Jesus and started to sink? He said, “O you of little faith!” Remember when Jesus stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee? He said to them all, “where is your faith!” And at other times he would place them into situations where they would need faith.

But what about you? Where is your faith today? Do you have a trust-filled relationship with Jesus? Jesus came to this earth, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and sent those same disciples who wanted to send the woman away out into the world to people just like the woman that they might share the good news that God was searching for people with whom he could have a trust-filled relationship.

After Jesus healed the woman’s daughter he and his followers left the area. They travelled along the northern part of the Sea of Galilee and into the region to the east of the Sea which was a Gentile area. Jesus healed a deaf man and as word spread of his presence thousands came to him again, and again they had no food except for seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. But what was this among four thousand men? But this time the disciples were ready! At Jesus command, the disciples had everyone recline and Jesus broke the bread and the fish and the disciples served all the people in this region of the Gentiles on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus watched as his men served the food. A day would come when they would serve the true, spiritual food to the multitudes not only here but everywhere in the world. As Jesus watched his men serve the bread and as watched 4000 men hungrily partake of the bread, did he think of the woman who needed only a crumb from his table to find healing for her daughter? Did Jesus think of the trust filled relationship that he had built with her? Did he think of the trust filled relationships he would build with millions of people in the ages to come? Was he thinking of you?

Ending

Hello again everyone – this is Jonathan Williams and as we bring this story to a close, I must ask you again, “Do you have a trust-filled relationship with Jesus?” Perhaps you have never trusted Christ as your Savior. Perhaps you are afraid to. Perhaps you have been disappointed at other times in your life.

I want to urge you today, not to delay, but to call upon the Lord like this woman who pleaded with Jesus to heal her daughter. I don’t know what you need to talk to the Lord about. I don’t know your particular needs or issues but bring them to the Lord, call upon him, don’t give up, and listen for his voice that will commend faith and rebuke unbelief.

Write to us and tell us of your faith journey. Write to us at Stories of the Master – PO Box 90047 in SA TX 78209 in the U.S. That’s Stories of the Master – PO Box 90047 in SA TX 78209.

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My name is Jonathan Williams and I hope you have been blessed today and I look forward to you joining us next week for another Story of the Master. Until then, may the Master himself richly bless you.