

C. Faith grows when we begin to see Jesus for who he is. He may have sounded like a magician at first, but he ended up as her master. In the beginning all she wanted was a Jesus for her benefit, but he became a Jesus for her beliefs. She first longed for his hand, but ended up worshiping at his feet. Oh how her vision had been cleared and her eyes opened.

D. And I believe that one secret we shouldn't miss is that she came to see herself in the right way. While Jesus' first words may have come like a blow to her soul, her response proves that she got the real message. In essence, when she says, ". . . but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs," she is admitting that Jesus is right. She is saying, "You're right, Lord. I don't deserve anything from you; you don't owe me a thing."

But it was that bit of insight, that new vision that opened her heart to Jesus, and his heart to hers. William Barclay suggests that while Jesus' words appear harsh, the tone in which they were given must have expressed love and understanding.

Application

A. My prayer is that on this Mother's Day your faith, and mine will grow into something great. And I promise you: The deeper you go with God, the greater your faith will become.

B. A submarine crew was going through a series of tests that required them to take the sub down for about a day. When they surfaced someone on shore asked the Captain how the storm had affected them during the night. "What storm?" was the Captain's response. "We didn't feel a thing."

Their submarine had been at a depth called "the cushion of the sea." It's where the waters below are never disturbed by the turbulence above.

C. Moms, your lives are full of demands – I urge you to go deep with God. Women, there are many pressures on you to conform and to perform – go so deep with God that you are no longer affected by the storms above. Men – our church and community needs godly men of faith who are desperate for God. Will you be a man of vision who leads your family or your peers deeper and deeper in faith? God will bless each of us as we grow our faith – great faith!

"A Mother's Faith"
Mark 7:24-30

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RMBC
Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. Erma Bombeck once wrote this piece: (Adapted)

By the time the Lord made mothers, he was into his sixth day, working overtime. An Angel said "Why are you spending so much time on this one"? The Lord answered, "Have you seen the spec sheet on her? She has to be washable, but not plastic, have 200 movable parts, all replaceable, run on black coffee and leftovers, have a lap that can hold three children at one time yet disappear when she stands up, have a kiss that can cure anything from a scraped knee to a broken heart, and have six pairs of hands."

The Angel was astounded. "Six pairs of hands! No Way!" The Lord replied, "Oh, it's not the hands that are the problem. It's the three pairs of eyes that mothers need--and that's just on the standard model! One pair is to see through closed doors as she asks children what they are doing even though she already knows. The pair in the back of her head is to see what she needs to know when no one thinks she can. And the third pair, in front, is for looking at an errant child and saying she understands and loves him or her without saying a single word."

The Angel tried to stop the Lord. "This is too much work for one day. Finish it tomorrow." But the Lord protested, "I am so close to finishing this creation that is so close to my own heart. She heals herself when she's sick, can feed a family of six on a pound of hamburger and gets a nine year old to stand in the shower."

The Angel moved closer and touched the woman, "But you have made her so soft, Lord." "She is soft," the Lord agreed, "but I have also made her tough. You have no idea what she can endure or accomplish." "Will she be able to think?" asked the Angel. The Lord replied, "Not only will she be able to think, she will be able to reason, and negotiate." The Angel then noticed something and reached out and touched the woman's cheek. "Oops, it looks like you have a leak with this model. I told you that you were putting too much into this one." "That's not a leak, it's a tear," the Lord explained. "A tear is a mother's way of expressing her joy and disappointment, her sorrow, pain, loneliness, grief and her pride."

The Angel was impressed, "You thought of everything, Lord, for mothers truly are amazing."

B. Matthew 15 and Mark 7:24-30 both tell the story of Jesus interacting with a mother. (Read from Mark) Some people don't like this story (Someone called her the Schizophoencian Woman). At first read Jesus appears totally out of character, putting off this woman's request and referring to the Greeks using the Jewish insult of a dog. But there is so much here for us to learn.

Matthew helps us by including Jesus' words to her, "Woman, you have great faith." What does great faith look like?

Great Faith is Progressive

A. Don't be discouraged if your faith is not where you hope it will one day be. God does not measure faith so much by its size as by its focus. Let me show you what I mean in this woman's story.

B. Remember, Jesus affirmed this woman's faith and healed her daughter, but she didn't start out with what we consider great faith. I see four steps in her faith journey:

1. She began with a misguided faith. She was a Canaanite – a descendent of the wicked idolatrous people God instructed Israel to drive from the Promised Land. Their worship was despicable; detestable in God's sight. Who knows what she believed.

2. Matthew tells us that she addressed Jesus as the "Son of David" when she first met him. Her first faith step was to view Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (In fact, that is why Jesus answered her with that surprising quote, "It's not right to give the children's bread to the dogs." That was a picture of the contrast between Jews and Gentiles). But her faith was turning from false God's to Israel's God.

3. In vs. 28 her faith takes a giant leap as she calls Jesus, "Lord." She began to recognize Jesus for who he is – the Lord of life and the Lord of all. That really is the ground of faith for each of us, you know. Until Jesus is Lord he is someone useful to us. Once he is Lord we become those whom he can use.

4. Although the order is a bit different in the story, the fact that she fell at Jesus feet shows her willingness to worship him. Matthew puts this act at the end of her plea and uses a word that means "to worship."

C. May I encourage you in your journey of faith today? Will you take a look at where you are in the journey and then thank God that he meets us wherever we are. Of course we are to grow in faith and in obedience. But the good news is that faith is more a journey than a destination. The Christian life is much better defined as a road than as a box. People fall out of boxes; pilgrims continue on journeys in spite of hardships and setbacks. How is your faith journey? Do you want great faith? Keep stepping forward.

Great Faith is Desperate

A. Have you ever felt desperate for your child? I know many of you have and there's no desperation quite like it – when they are sick or hurt; when our child is in danger or has wandered away from our care or our lives we can go mad with desperation for our child--And in that setting God can grow our faith.

B. Notice what this woman overcame to get to Jesus and find his answer to her desperation. I refuse to even watch commercials for "Desperate Housewives" but this was one desperate house-wife.

1. Barriers didn't stop her. I see at least four barriers that could have discouraged her or kept her from coming to Jesus.

- The gender barrier in that day was great. Women did not approach men in public – but she was desperate
- The ethnic barrier was huge. Gentiles and Jews did not get along. History and prejudice were against her – but she was desperate
- The cultural barrier was real. Jesus spent most of his time in Judea and Galilee, but on this teaching tour he had taken his disciples west and north to the area of Tyre. It was like a white seminary professor taking his students on a tour of southeast Fresno, stopping to eat in Calwa – but she was desperate
- The spiritual barrier was there. The problem with her daughter was spiritual. The spirit invading her was evil and Jesus was holy and righteous – but she was desperate.

2. Beliefs didn't stop her. Remember she came as a pagan from Canaan. Who knows what gods she had worshiped in the past? In order to find help for her child she had to come to terms with her world view and her God view. The differences were like a chasm, but not too deep to keep someone desperate away.

3. The Disciples didn't stop her. Again we lean on Matthew to learn that the disciples had become weary of her begging. I don't know if she had become an embarrassment or a nuisance, but whatever it was the disciples asked Jesus to "send her away."

C. I'm wondering if you are willing to let the desperation of life drive you to Jesus. It is when we are faced with trials like that of this woman that we have to finally make a choice between despair and determination; between pity and persistence. She began by calling on Jesus and ended up on her knees worshiping him. That is the journey of great faith. Let it be your journey.

Great Faith is Visionary

A. Do you have dreams for the future? I hope you do, even if only one or two of them come true. Recently I got to speak to the Immanuel family at the 65th anniversary, and one of the things I shared was that when our memories become greater than our dreams we begin to die. I said that is true for churches and organizations; it is true for each of us too.

B. This woman saw what her daughter could become. Sacrifices to her gods had only made the situation worse, but she had a dream that one day her little girl would be something good if not somebody great. She saw into the future with hope, and that hope turned to faith the closer she got to Jesus.

Introduction

God made mothers special! Thank you, Moms.

Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28

Matthew 15:28: “Woman, you have great faith.”

Great Faith is Progressive

God does not measure faith by _____ as much as by _____

This woman began with _____ faith

She moved to _____ faith (Jesus as a Jewish Messiah)

She discovered Jesus as _____

She ended in _____ (Knelt before him – Matt 15:25)

Good News: Faith is more a _____ than a _____

Great Faith is Desperate

In times of _____ God can grow our faith

This woman overcame:

Will you allow the desperations of life _____ you to Jesus?

Great Faith is Visionary

When your _____ are bigger than your _____ you
begin to die. What are your dreams for the future?

This woman saw:

What her _____ could become

Jesus in a new _____

Herself in proper _____ to Jesus

Application

Prayer: Lord, help my faith grow into something _____

Help me go _____ with you

Make me _____ for more of you