

Living the Great Adventure – p.4
A Desperate Mother
Matthew 14:21-28
John C. Williamson

Introduction

1. ILLUSTRATION: Amanda falling through the hole in the floor
2. It was the first time I saw Cathy as a desperate mother. I want to tell you something I learned: **never get in the way of a desperate mother.**
3. Did you know there is a story in the Bible about a desperate mother?
 - a) We have been following Jesus through the book of Matthew and it just so happens that today we come to the story of the desperate mother.
 - b) It takes place in the “region of Tyre and Sidon”.
 - c) They are “port cities in what today would be parts of Lebanon and Syria” (Blomberg, 242).
4. Look at Matthew 14:21

²¹Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

 - a) This was “Gentile” territory and these two cities were the “the epitome of Gentile ‘uncleanness” (Weber, 230).
 - b) The people of this region had a reputation – but it was not the kind of reputation you want to have.
 - c) They were known for “their Baal worship and arrogant pride in their power and wealth” (Wilkins, 420).
5. And Jesus went there.
 - a) He did not have to go there. He was free to walk anywhere he wanted to go – he made a choice to go there. Why? Why would you go to a place that is known for worship of another deity and pride?
 - b) Well, we do know that Jesus was not on a mission to these cities – he was withdrawing from the Jewish opposition and the Bible does not say he went into the cities – just the region, but he went there to withdraw from the criticism and rejection by the Jews.
6. While he was there he met a desperate woman.
 - a) There was a woman who lived there and she had a demon possessed daughter.
 - b) She somehow heard about Jesus and she believed Jesus could help her daughter and she was going to get that help.
 - c) She demonstrated a desperate faith. Have you ever needed a desperate faith? Some of you know what I’m talking about.
 - d) You have exhausted all your options and you have nothing else. You have a child so deep in junk that God is your only option.
7. Today we are going to unwrap some of these verses that tell this woman’s story;

That’s where we are going today in the Word of God

A Desperate Faith...

Seeks out the answer (v.22)

²²A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

1. Jesus is confronted by a Canaanite woman (a pagan non-Jew woman) unclean and undesirable.
 - a) “There is no indication that he sought contact with the local people; it is the woman who initiate(s) the contact, and Jesus here shows no enthusiasm for the encounter” (France, 592).

- b) The Canaanites were “the bitter biblical enemies of Israel” (Briscoe, 262). They “were one of the most idolatrous nations Israel was instructed to exterminate” (Weber, 230).
- 2. And when Jesus came to this area a woman from that area came to Jesus.
 - a) And she addressed him in an unusual way; *Lord, Son of David*”.
 - b) She is not a Jew, but “she clearly has some knowledge of Judaism and in using a Jewish messianic title she is hoping to attract the interest of a Jewish teacher who would not have expected such a title in this foreign context” (France, 593).
- 3. “The woman recognizes that Jesus is no mere magician who performs feats for fame or money” (Keener, 264).
 - a) ““A temple dedicated to Eshmun, a god of healing, was located three miles northwest of Sidon. This woman was likely familiar with the pagan deity, (and perhaps she has already been there in an effort to find help for her daughter), but Jesus’ reputation has preceded him and she came instead to Jesus for healing for her daughter” (Wilkins, 539).
 - b) And with great courage she tells Jesus the problem: *My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.*”
 - c) A literal translation would read: *“My daughter is badly demon possessed”*
 - d) Okay – there it is! She admitted it.
 - e) And she admitted it to the Lord, Son of David she had heard so much about. He is her hope. She believed that if she could just tell him he would rescue this child from the demon.

Is persistent (vv.23-24)

- 1. It is amazing that this unclean, undesirable, Gentile, Canaanite woman would approach Jesus, a Jewish man but His response is simply unbelievable to her.
²³*Jesus did not answer a word.*
- 2. What kind of response is this? And this coming from Jesus!
 - a) “Jesus breaks his pattern of immediately responding to requests for healing. His silence therefore seems deliberate and dramatic” (Blomberg, 243).
 - b) When you come expecting one thing from Jesus and you get something else – it makes you pay attention!
 - c) When Jesus is silent it means something. When you pray and you don’t hear from heaven – it means something.
- 3. Apparently the woman is not deterred by Jesus silence – but is actually emboldened to continue asking and it is so annoying to the disciples they ask Jesus to send her away:
So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”
 - a) “Twelve strong men could presumably have driven the woman away themselves, so that fact that instead they ask Jesus to take action may suggest that by “send her away” they meant, “Do what she wants so that she will go away” (France, 593).
 - b) In fact, Jesus answer seems to indicate that.
²⁴*He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”*
- 4. What does that mean and what does it have to do with the story?
 - a) Jesus says – why should I give her what she wants – I was sent to the people of the covenant.
 - b) Jesus was on the earth to make good on God’s promise to Abraham so “Jesus could say he was sent by the Father to Israel” (Weber, 231).
 - c) Jesus is not saying he was sent to the ones of Israel who are lost – but the “lost sheep who are the house of Israel” (Wilkins, 539).
- 5. The woman who apparently had been crying to Jesus from a distance, heard what he said but is not put off by Jesus remarks because Matthew tells us that she “comes up to Jesus with a personal approach” (France, 594).

Is humble(vv.25-27)

²⁵The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

1. "Her faith moved beyond ethnic and cultural obstacles, bypassed the forms of ritual religion, and humbly confessed the Master's Lordship" (Augsburger, 196).
 - a) The Greek word translated "knelt" is proskyneo and it literally means "bow down". It is the common word that means "to worship".
 - b) Surely Jesus will respond to this woman's need now. She has addressed him as the Son of David – the Messiah sent from God; and she is now kneeling on the ground before him, and with urgency cries for help!
2. And notice how Jesus replies:

²⁶He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

 - a) Jews commonly referred to Gentiles as "dogs" meaning "unclean, wild dogs" (Weber 321).
 - b) Jesus is setting up what is about to happen.
 - c) She needs to know that she is not a part of covenant group.
 - d) The children of Israel "are in a position of right and privilege, which the dogs cannot hope to share; what is holy is not to be given to dogs" (France, 595).
 - e) "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces. - Matthew 7:6
3. Now what does "great faith" do in a moment like this?
 - a) She has met the silence of Jesus, and the pushback from Jesus; but she is desperate so "the 'debate' reaches its climax in an unexpectedly feisty response from this Gentile woman" (France, 595).

²⁷"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."
 - b) "She worded her response not as a contradiction of what Jesus had just said but as an extension of the argument Jesus had presented" (Weber, 232).
 - c) Okay – I am but a dog – you are still the master – but the "dogs do have a right to be fed, even if all they get is the leftovers" (France, 595).
 - d) She understands God's plan is to offer the Messiah first to Israel the covenant nation – but she believes that Israel was not chosen just for its own personal benefit – but to bless the world.
4. "She does not argue that her needs make her an exception, or that she has a right to Israel's covenanted mercies, or that the mysterious ways of divine election and justice are unfair. She abandons mention of Jesus as "Son of David" and simply asks for help; "and she is confident that even if she is not entitled to sit down as a guest at Messiah's table, Gentile 'dog' that she is, yet at least she may be allowed to receive a crumb of the uncovenanted mercies of God" (Carson, 355-356).

Is rewarded (v.28)

²⁸Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

1. "Faith rather than ethnicity determined that Jesus would answer the woman's prayer" (Hahn, 197).
2. But pay real close attention to this part or you will get real messed up in your faith journey.
3. ILLUSTRATION: Viviano's "if you have enough faith" – God will heal your daughter.
4. "Great faith does not imply a large quantity but rather an immovable steadfastness in trusting God's Word and will against all odds and circumstances" (Wilkins 546).
 - a) "Faith is essentially accepting the revelation and will of God as one's own reality and purpose for life" (Wilkins 540).

- b) “Jesus compassionate care is available to all who take his Word and will as their reality and purpose for life” (Wilkins 546).

What does this desperate mother teach us about living the great adventure?

Here is today’s **Bottom Line: The fourth secret for living the great adventure: Be guided by the humble submission to the truth about yourself and God!**

God loves the simple, humble helpless cry, “Lord, help me!” It moves the heart of God and when God’s heart is moved his hand is moved as well.

Let’s apply this truth:

To those checking out the Christian Faith there are two things you should take away from this story:

1. Know that what you really need in life is Jesus

- a) There are a lot of “temples” and churches you can visit. There are a lot of religions you can investigate. There are a lot of ideas you can chase – but in the end you need Jesus.
- b) Many people today believe life is pointless. They believe that all that matters is what we see and when we die – we die.
- c) “If life is pointless, why should ethics serve any purpose except my own? If I am merely the product of matter and at the mercy of material determinism, why should I subject myself to anyone else’s moral convictions? If, on the other hand, I am fashioned by God for His purpose, then I need to know Him and know that purpose for which I have been made, for out of that purpose is born my sense of right and wrong”. (Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God*, pg.40)
- d) We need Jesus!

2. Be urgent in your search for Jesus

To those devoted to being better Christ followers I would suggest four things you can take away from this story:

1. “Privilege demands accountability”

- a) Jesus ministry in this story was extended to Gentiles.
- b) It was extended to Gentiles because the Jews rejected the message. They were expected to cradle the truth of Jesus Christ Son of God as Messiah and then they were to take that truth to the rest of the world. But they rejected the message.

2. People are seeking Jesus in the most unlikely places

- a) They were known for “their Baal worship and arrogant pride in their power and wealth”
- b) The church is growing in China.
- c) That’s right – the church is growing faster in China than anywhere else in the world right now.
- d) It is growing because they abandoned God and have discovered that arrogant pride, power and the worship of self is not working and they are discovering God.
- e) Here in the U.S. we have abandoned God and they are finding that every other choice is an insufficient guide for life’s deepest issues.
- f) “In our search for morality and happiness outside of God, we have effectively lost all three – God, morality and happiness.” (Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God*, pg. 40)
- g) But don’t give up now!!! – People are seeking Jesus in the most unlikely places.

3. When you are disappointed with where life has taken you – don’t quit!

ILLUSTRATION: Going back to college – dad telling me to not quit!

4. Know what you need from Jesus and ask for it with urgency!

Video Clip: Pray Boldly

