

OVERVIEW: THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

MATTHEW 15:21-28; MARK 7:24-30

To escape the constant demands of the crowds in Galilee, Jesus traveled northwest about 30 miles into the mountains of upper Galilee, to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He sought seclusion in a house there.

But he could not escape notice. A Syrophenician (a person from the northern portion of Phoenicia, near Syria) woman was in deep distress because her daughter had an unclean spirit. Leaving the child at home, she sought Jesus' help. She called on him to have mercy on her and heal her daughter.

At first Jesus seemed to ignore her, and the disciples even asked Jesus to send her away because she "keeps shouting after us," refusing to be "put off." Jesus finally answered her and said that he was sent only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." She persisted, and kneeling before him said, "Lord, help me." He answered her by saying that it was "not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She answered, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Jesus was moved by her faith. He told her to return home; the demon had left her daughter. The woman went home and found her daughter healed.

- Jesus' ministry was primarily to the Jews. He would later rely on his followers to carry his message to the larger world. Yet, though this woman was a Gentile and not part of the "house of Israel," her faith made the healing of her daughter possible.
 - In Jesus' day, Jews often referred to Gentiles as "dogs." Perhaps Jesus used this term with the Canaanite woman to push her to express her faith.
- I. Jesus traveled to the mountains of Galilee.
 - a. He wanted to get away from the crowds, but a woman sought his help.
 - b. She cried out to Jesus, asking him to heal her daughter who had an unclean spirit.
 - II. At first, Jesus did not respond.
 - a. The disciples wanted to send the woman away.
 - b. Jesus finally answered that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.
 - c. The woman kept asking for help and Jesus was moved by her faith.
 - d. He told her to return home because the demon had left her daughter.