

Ain't Too Proud to Beg

Mark 7:24-30

Welcome

Intro:

[Ain't Too Proud to Beg](#) (Temptations, 1966; Rolling Stones, 1974, Rick Astley 1989)

I know you wanna leave me, but I refuse to let you go.

If I have to beg and plead for your sympathy, I don't mind 'cause you mean that much to me.

Ain't too proud to beg, sweet darlin'...

What have you begged for? What would it take for you to beg—I mean REALLY beg? How desperate would you have to be? Maybe if your life or the life of someone you love depended on it?

Or are you too proud to beg?

In this story today from Mark Ch. 7 we see and hear someone who ain't too proud to beg....

- a desperate, determined woman crying at the feet of Jesus for Him to save her little girl
- a parent desperate to save her child from bondage and death
- an unnamed and unworthy outsider—in faith—pleading with Jesus for his mercy and grace

Such a simple story. 7 verses. 1 brief scene. 2 people: Jesus and an unnamed Gentile woman. A few lines of dialogue. Another miracle. Another person healed. Another demon cast out. What are we to make of all this? What are we to learn from it and how are we to be changed by it? What is Jesus teaching us?

In Mark, we've been asking a couple of key **questions:**

- **Who is this Jesus?**
- **What does it mean to be part of his kingdom and follow him in faith?**

Let's keep those questions in mind today and see how they are answered in simple, yet bold and shocking ways. In addition, as we'll see and hear, **this text...**

1. **Shows that the grace and mercy of Jesus, and specifically the gospel, is for all peoples—Jews and Gentiles.** The kingdom of Christ is global and it is diverse.
2. **It points us ahead to the Great Commission** of Jesus (Matt 28), to **Acts** and the spread of the gospel throughout the Gentile world, to **today** as Jesus continues to call people from across the world into his family through adoption, and to the **days eternal** when people from every tribe and tongue will gather at his throne in his kingdom to worship and glorify him.
3. **Reassures Gentiles (that's most if not all of us) that the “good news” is for them,** just as it was for the Syrophenician woman, and that we too are part of the true people of God (we have been grafted in) – if we have genuine faith in Jesus.
4. **Challenges the unbeliever to respond to the person and power and mission of Jesus, with desperate hope and faith.**

Main Ideas:

1. **Personal (Individual):** Through Jesus, God provides the mercy and grace we do not deserve but desperately need. We should expectantly and humbly ask for, receive and live in the grace and mercy of Jesus.
2. **General (Big picture):** Jesus will be merciful and gracious to save people from all peoples. His grace and mercy is for the world. (Not just our little world)

Recap:

- **Don't miss this!** The passage we'll study today is...
 1. Sandwiched in the middle of two passages where Jesus compassionately and miraculously feeds

multitudes with bread (**Ch. 6** and again in **Ch. 8**). Today we will see him give a Gentile the bread of life.

2. Immediately follows a passage about what makes a person clean or unclean. Today we see Jesus go to an “unclean” land, associate himself with “unclean” Gentile and heal a little girl of an unclean spirit.
- **Should also remind** us of the account when **Elijah** provided food for a Syrophenician woman and her son at Zarephath, between Tyre and Sidon, and his resurrection of the son (**1 Kgs 17:8–24**).

Today’s Passage: An unexpected journey, a desperate appeal, a hard truth, a persistent faith, and a glorious grace.

Outline:

1. Seek Jesus with desperate humility and hope. (7:24-26)

24 – Jesus Seeks Unobtainable Solitude.

24a *And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.*

- Jesus leaves Galilee (Israel), perhaps secretly, and heads 20-30 miles or so north and west into the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon (Phoenicia then, Lebanon today).
- **Robert Stein:** “There was little love lost between the people of Galilee and people of Tyre, who were according to the ancient historian Josephus ‘notoriously our [the Jews’] bitterest enemies.’” (And this isn't just a rivalry like Duke and Carolina or Pawnee and Eagleton. They were bitter enemies.)
- This wasn't just Gentile territory, this was **the armpit of the Gentile world**. This was the Las Vegas (or Eastern Kentucky or Athens, Georgia) of Gentile territory. No Jew would travel there if they could avoid it, and certainly no Jew would go there and stay in the house of a Gentile. And go figure, Jesus does exactly that, leaving his home country to travel and stay in “enemy” territory.
- **This was huge! What did he go there for?**

24b *And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden.*

- Jesus goes into a Gentile house but wanted to keep it on the DL (down-low)..
- **Why?** 4 possible reasons...
 1. **Rest and retreat** (cf. **Mark 6:31** and other times Jesus sought solitude and rest)
 2. **Focused time with his disciples** **Matthew (15:13)** tells us they or at least some of them were there.
 3. **Prepare himself for what lie ahead**
 4. **Avoid being taken as a captive king and military messiah** that we learned was possible following the feeding of the 5,000? (**John 6:15**)
 5. What seems clear: He **wanted to keep a low profile** and did **not** go there for **public ministry**.
- **Yet, He could not be hidden.** People found out he was there. **How?**
 1. **Reputation** (people had heard of him): **Mark 3:7-8:** *⁷ Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea ⁸ and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him.*
 2. **Word got out.** People heard Jesus was in town! Hard to keep that a secret. News trucks out front. Maybe he ordered a pizza and the delivery guy talked. **(If POTUS or some famous actor came to Youngsville, and came to stay at my house, you'd probably hear about it. It would make the local news, gossip circles, Instagram.)**
 3. **Somehow or another** a Gentile woman with a demon possessed daughter hears Jesus is in town and where he was staying (**notice God’s providence in all this**) and rushes to see him.

25-26 – An Unworthy Outsider Cries Out to Jesus for Grace and Mercy.

²⁵ But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

- **Who is this woman? (25a and 26a)**
 1. **25-** mother of a little girl relatively young
 2. **26-** Gentile (non-Jew), probably spoke Greek Jesus would have probably spoke to her in Greek
 3. **26-** Syrophenician by birth (Phoenicia belonged to Syria) Born a Gentile,
 - **Matthew (15:22)** calls her a *Canaanite woman*
 4. **26-** had a daughter that was demon-possessed (with an *unclean spirit*).
- **What did she do?**
 1. She **begs, cries out, pleads** with Jesus to heal her daughter – *to cast the demon out*
 2. **Supplication** – asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly (cf. **Psalms & James 5:13-16**)
- **Implications (Get a sense of the tension here!):**
 1. Gentile woman, outside of the family of God (nation of Israel), considered “unclean” culturally, genetically and ceremoniously. And not just “unclean” just because she didn’t keep the law and the traditions, but considered “unclean” because she was born that way...because she was a Gentile.
 2. She was **innately unclean**: an outsider to the covenant, **not worthy of the grace and mercy of God**. She couldn’t be more unclean and unworthy to speak to a Jew, especially a priest or prophet or king.
 3. **Jesus wasn’t in public**. He was in a house, a private home, and she barges right in. By all custom and culture and tradition she didn’t belong there with him. It wasn’t just rude to invite herself in, it would have been offensive. Matthews tells us the disciples wanted Jesus to send her away (**Matt. 15:23**). They were annoyed with her incessant crying. (**Let us never be annoyed when someone near us is seeking and crying out to Jesus.**)
 4. **So here we are**: in an “unclean” land, in an “unclean” house, with “unclean” woman appears with a daughter with an unclean spirit. And she comes to Jesus, uninvited, and begs at his feet.
 5. What was she thinking? What would people think? What would the religious leaders think?
- **Three things we can say about this woman:**
 1. **Hungry**: she is **desperately starving** for the bread of mercy and grace from the hand of Jesus.
 2. **Humble**: she **fell down at the feet of Jesus**; **prostrate** (lying flat on the ground, with her face to the floor) indication of both **grief** and **reverence**.
 3. **Helpless Herself Yet Hopeful in Him**: Despite all indications to the contrary, **she was hopeful**. She was **humble herself but confident in Jesus**. She’d heard about his power and miracle working. He had left his home country come to hers. And in this situation he was her only hope. Jesus was her only hope. (**not Obi-Wan in Episode 4 of Star Wars!**).

APPLICATION:

- **How about you? Are you hungry, humble and hopeful for the grace and mercy of Jesus? Have you cried out for his mercy and grace?**
- **Grace** - unmerited favor, the good/blessing that you do not deserve and cannot obtain, except through the lovingkindness of another.
- We call out and beg for grace and mercy when...
 1. **We are desperately aware of our need**. We beg when we are hungry for mercy.
 2. **We are convinced of our own futility and inadequacy but are convinced of the power and ability of someone else**. We beg when we are helpless ourselves yet hopeful in another.
 3. **We in faith, humbly prostrate (submit) ourselves to God and cry to Him for mercy and grace.**

ILLUSTRATION: For some of you a memory of such an occasion comes quickly to your mind. For me I’m reminded of my own daughter and how we begged God for merciful healing for her Story of Mabry in the ER

APPLICATION:

- **Why would you not ask Jesus for his grace?** And not just for physical healing or material blessing, but his grace to save you and sustain you?

Possible reasons (note none of these apply to this lady):

1. Don't think you need it.

- **Self-righteousness** (I'm already good enough. Don't see myself as a sinner. I'm clean already.)
- **Pride** (I can do it myself. I can make myself clean.)
- **Ignorance & apathy** (I'm doing just fine, thank you. I really don't care.)

2. Don't believe Jesus can't do it.

- **Disbelief** (hard heartedness...Don't believe in God. Heaven isn't real. The Bible isn't true. Jesus isn't God and he can't forgive sins and change people.)
- **Self-loathing & fatalism** (I'm too bad, too unclean. Jesus can't forgive me. I'm a lost cause.)

3. Aren't willing to ask for it.

- You can think you need it and even that Jesus can do it, but you still **won't bend the knee, call him Lord, and receive his mercy. Why?**
- **You won't submit your will and your life to him.** (gets back to pride)
- This text should challenge those wrong assumptions, disbelief and pride, and show us a powerful example of what it looks like humbly, hungrily and hopefully cry out to the Lord in faith for mercy and grace.

2. Respond to Jesus and His Gospel with Persistent Faith (7:27-28).

27 - Jesus Responds with a Parable.

27 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

- **How does Jesus respond – to her falling and his feet and crying for mercy?** He refers to her a dog! Didn't see that coming!
- Scene in *When Harry Met Sally* where he refers to her as dog, and in response Sally says: **"I am? I am the dog? I am the dog? (Harry: Um-hmm.) Sally: I am the dog. I-I don't see that Harry. If anybody is the dog, you are the dog.**
- **This is NOT the insult we might at first think it is.** But we'll get there in a minute.
- **Surprise!** Jesus isn't this affable, passive, laid-back fellow we sometimes imagine him to be. He speaks **the truth in love. Because He loves us He tells us what we need to hear, but probably don't like to hear.**
- Here he is speaking **hard truths about the gospel, his mission, his kingdom...and who we are.**
- **What are we to make of him calling her a dog?** Need some context first:
 1. Jews often used the word "dogs" to refer to Gentiles.
 2. Were associated with pigs (unclean) and heretics.
 3. For the dog lovers out there (and I'm one): Dogs were **rarely kept as pets**, but rather were considered **unclean, unwanted scavengers.**
 4. **In this text:** word translated "dogs" (*kynarioi*) *actually* means **puppies or small house dogs**, animals that would have been fed scraps or leftovers from the table. Softens the boldness of Jesus' statement but only a little.
- **What is Jesus doing? NOT insulting her but rather what he's done over and over again...teaching and challenging people with parables.** And with this parable his intent is **not to insult**, but rather to **provoke her faith** and to **invite her to confess that faith. Think about this...**
 1. **The disciples** haven't understood his parables, at least not without explanation.
 2. **The Pharisees and scribes** haven't understood his parables.
 3. **How will this Gentile woman understand? She isn't as worthy or as wise as those people.** If they don't understand Jesus and what He teaches, how will she?
 4. **What would we expect (if this happened today)?** she will be **insulted and offended and angered**, or she will be **heartbroken and dejected and despair.** *And that's often what we do when we*

encounter or are confronted with hard truths from God's Word. In our **self-righteous pride** or in our **despair and hopelessness** we often **reject God's Word, either directly or with our passive disobedience.** In either extreme we think wrongly about ourselves AND God. But there is a **third option**, as well see in just a minute.

- **What is Jesus saying in this parable?**

1. **Remember in the OT:** the people of Israel = the children of God. So in this parable the Israelites are the children and the Gentiles are the little dogs or puppies.
2. **Jesus is acknowledging and affirming** the **privilege** of Israel to hear the gospel **first** (but **not exclusively**) and **asserting** the same priority Paul affirms *"first for the Jew, then for the Gentile"* (Rom. 1:16; 2:9–10)
3. "The term "first" (*prōton*) in Jesus's reply is intended to indicate that she as a Gentile is **not excluded from God's mercy**, but that there exists a **divinely established temporal priority** in which the Jew is "first."

- **Implications:**

1. The Jews had a **privileged position** (as the children of God) to be fed (the gospel) **first**.
2. Jesus is NOT insulting Gentiles by calling them dogs, rather He is **explaining (via a parable)** that his mission and the gospel must be first "fed" to the Jews, then to the Gentiles.
3. **For her (and us):** Jesus wants to both teach and provoke her: What do you believe about me? What do you believe about yourself? What do believe about grace and the kingdom? **Who am I to you? And who are you to me?**

28 - She Finishes the Parable!

28 But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

- **This text is full of surprises!**
- **She isn't insulted or offended!** She doesn't storm off, angry, sulking, muttering things about Jesus ("He can't call me a dog! Who's this guy think he is!?!"). She doesn't file a defamation lawsuit.
- **She doesn't even argue with him or deny the truth of his statement**, though it was surely difficult to hear.
- But she **doesn't back away** either, does she? **She accepts the truth and responds appropriately—in faith!**
- **Specifically...**
 1. **She addresses him as "Lord"** (only time in Mark's Gospel is Jesus addressed as "Lord" by someone other than Jesus himself)
 2. **She understands and agrees with the parable and its implications:** *"Yes, Lord"*
 - **She gets it!** In sharp contrast to the Pharisees and Jesus' disciples **SHE GETS IT! REALLY GETS IT!**
 - It was **not an insult**, but rather a **provocation of faith**, in the form of a **parable**.
 3. **And she persists! She finishes the parable!**
 - *"Yes Lord I know I'm a dog, begging under the table at your feet for bread. I just need some crumbs. Just some crumbs of mercy and grace. And I know the Jews must come first. And I know I'm an outsider and I'm not part of that family and I don't have a seat at your table. Yes, Lord I know all that is true. But I believe—that you have grace left for me...right now. I just need some crumbs Lord and I think you have some for me."*
 - **Luther:** [to Jesus] "Very well, she says, if I am a dog, I ask no more than a dog's rights. I am not a child nor am I of Abraham's seed, but you are a rich Lord and set a lavish table. Give your children the bread and a place at the table; I do not wish that. Let me, merely like a dog, pick up the crumbs under the table, allowing me that which the children don't need or even miss, the crumbs, and I will be content therewith."
 - **David Garland:** "She comes empty-handed and can make no claim. She has no merit, no priority standing, nothing to commend her. Her manner is the opposite of the snippy "you-owe-me" attitude that prevails among so many today. She does not argue that her case is an exception or lobby for special treatment. She does not point out that Jesus is not even in the

land of Israel; how could he deprive Jews of bread by helping her? On the other hand, she does not cut herself off from the miraculous power of Jesus by thinking that she is too unworthy to receive anything at all. She accepts his judgment and bows down as a beggar for grace. She accepts that she is unacceptable.”

• **Why does she respond this way and what can we learn from it?**

1. **By herself, she is helpless. But because of Jesus, she is hopeful.**
2. **By herself, she is desperately hungry. But through Jesus, she can be fed the bread of life.**
3. **Of herself she is humble. But of Jesus she is confident.**

She doesn't assert her right to grace, but rather she asserts her unworthiness and desperate need for grace. Grace isn't deserved. It isn't a right. It is unmerited favor. It's an undeserved gift and it didn't come cheap. It is the good from the hand of God that we do not deserve but we desperately need and hope for and is provided to us through Jesus Christ. And as **Tim Keller** points out, this is the heart of the gospel: “We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

- This story **would NOT have offended Gentile believers but rather would have encouraged them. And it shouldn't offend but encourage us!** There is an abundance of grace from which Christ will feed those that cry out to him faith. And through faith alone in Christ alone, Jews and Gentiles now partake at the table of grace and mercy—together!

David Garland: “Others might dismiss someone as the wrong race, nationality, or social class, or as from the wrong religious background, but none of these things prevents one from receiving God's merciful healing. Those who exercise humble faith will receive bread.”

APPLICATION:

Unbeliever: Go to Jesus like this lady: desperately hungry, humble in yourself, yet confidently hopeful in Him. And Jesus will give you a seat at the table with the family, and feed you the bread of life.

Brothers & Sisters: Be encouraged! Be mindful and thankful for the merciful and gracious compassion he has shown you. And as you sit at the table, love the savior who feeds you with everyday grace, speak to him prayer, listen to his voice, obey his words, and help take the saving message of the gospel to the lost people of this world.

How will Jesus respond? This is the best part!

3. **Receive from Jesus His Abundant Mercy & Grace (7:29-30).**

29 – Faith Affirmed & Grace Pronounced.

29 *And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."*

- **Something happens between vv. 28 & 29.** Something Mark doesn't explain or elaborate on. I think Jesus must have had a big grin on his face. He was clearly delighted with her response.
- **Jesus says to her:** “*return to your daughter...the demon is gone, she is free.*”
- **Jesus heals her little girl.** No magic wand. No spells. No incantations. No hocus pocus. No trickery or sorcery. **Jesus Christ, Son of God, wills it done then proclaims it done.**
 1. **Only instance** in Mark of exorcism/healing from a **distance** (cf **Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10; John 4:43–53**)
 2. **The girl isn't even there!** Doesn't matter. Doesn't matter she's not there – **he knows where she is. He knows who she is. He knows her condition. And he knows you and your condition too.**
 3. **This evil cannot hide or reside in this little girl any longer.** The demon is not beyond the reach and power of Jesus. **If he wills it gone it will be.**
 4. **And it was. Just like that.** In a moment, in “twinkling of an eye” the demon was gone. The girl was healed and free and herself again. **Just like that. Jesus doesn't even break a sweat.**

30 – Grace Received.

30 *And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.*

- **What was this like for this little girl?** Her mom is away, out looking for Jesus, begging in hope of healing. She is secluded, probably scared. She is the most unclean of the unclean. In the death grips of evil. **Who cares about her? Who can save her? Who can free her? JESUS!**
- One moment she is **enslaved**, the next she is **free**. One moment she is **virtually dead**, the next she is **alive**. One moment she is **unable to find rest and peace**, the next she lying in bed, **resting** and at **peace**.
- **And in walks mama**. What a sweet homecoming that must have been!
- **Brothers and sisters:** You too will one day have a sweet homecoming. If you are in Christ, if He is your Lord, **never forget that...**
 1. You were once a **slave to sin**, but now you are **free in Christ**. (**Rom 8.2:** *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*)
 2. You were once **dead in your sins**. But now you have **life eternal**. (**Eph. 2:4-5:** ⁴ *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,* ⁵ *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.*)
 3. You once had **no peace**. But now you have an **everlasting peace**. (**Rom. 5:1:** *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*)
 4. You were once **outsiders, alienated, strangers to the covenants of promises, separated from God**. But now you have been **brought in by the blood of Jesus**. (**Eph. 2:12-12**) ¹² *Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* ¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*
 5. You were once **outside the family of God (a dog on the floor)**, but now you are an **adopted child of the King and you eat at his table and you share in his inheritance**. (**Gal. 4:5-7:** [God sent forth his son...]) ⁵ *to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* ⁶ *And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”* ⁷ *So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*)
 6. You were once **without hope in this world**. But now you can look forward with hope and certainty to an **unimaginable, glorious homecoming**. (**1 Cor. 15:51-52:** ⁵¹ *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*)
- **Unbelievers, I beg you:**
 1. **Be hungry**. Your lost and weary soul needs new life and nourishment to survive. And there's but one source: Jesus and his gospel. **Be hungry for the gospel**, be hungry for the mercy and grace of Jesus.
 2. **Be humble**. You are not, on your own and with your own doing, worthy. But Jesus is. And he will cover you with his righteousness. Humble yourself before him and cry out for him to save and sustain you. **Be humble in yourself and confident in Christ**.
 3. **Be hopeful**. Jesus is able. He wishes none to perish. Jesus keeps his promises. **Hope in Christ!**

John 6:47-51: ⁴⁷ *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.* ⁴⁸ *I am the bread of life.* ⁴⁹ *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* ⁵⁰ *This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.* ⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*

Closing Prayer