

The “Treat” of Life

(Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30)

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Introduction.

Gentile vs Jew context.

Couple of last sermon contexts (Bread of Life and Religious Traditions).

1. Approach, The Silent Treatment. (Illustration: Americans and Canadians)

- a. She heard of Jesus.
- b. She approached him right.
 - i. From a far.
 - ii. Son of David.
- c. Jesus gave her the silent treatment. Why? Syncretism.

2. Approach, The “Intercession.” (Illustration: College Admission Incident)

- a. Protocols.
- b. The disciple’s separatist heart.
- c. Jesus needs to intervene. Why? To not let her go.

3. Approach, The “Diplomatic Answer.” (Illustration: Empty Diplomacy)

- a. Worship.
- b. Replying “by the book.”
- c. The little dog – clarification.
- d. Jesus goes beyond the book.

4. Approach, The “Treat.” (Illustration: Treat to the puppy)

- a. The Treat of Life.
- b. Satisfaction.

Conclusion.

- a. An encouragement for our praying mom’s. (mark’s account)
- b. The Jews reject, the Gentiles receive.

c. Faith: Doesn't demand, deserve, give up – It only humbly believes.

Charles H. Spurgeon Summary.

Last sermon we talked about the Elders' traditions—ceremonially washing hands and “offering” their properties to God—which was pure hypocrisy, by the way. As the Prophet Isaiah said, “with their lips they honour God, with their hearts they dishonour him.”

Following this, Jesus now sets off to the Gentile land of Tyre and Sidon. He is literally doing the opposite of what the Pharisees were doing—He is connecting to people instead of excluding them. What was the main issue with the Pharisees' traditions? **Separation.**

Sin already separates people from God. Thus, God chose one nation (Israel) to be near Him. Why on earth did the Pharisees add another layer of separation within their own people (washing of hands)? And why on earth did the Scribes consecrate their houses as Clergy Residences (“Corban”)? By doing these, they added a layer of separation—“clergy” and “lay”—within their own people. (That's a situation you are familiar with; you can recall the Medieval Catholic Church, when clergy (“holy”) vs. lay people (“common”) was a commonly taught practice.)

Let us see how Jesus connects with this foreign lady.

1. Approach, Silence.

So now Jesus sets off to the Gentile land, and this Gentile woman comes out to meet Him. She came to Jesus because she had heard of the great miracles He had been doing. As she approaches Him from a distance, she requests a miracle for her daughter—she is possessed by a demon—but Christ gives her no answer.

It is important to notice that she approached Him correctly: (a) First from afar, because He is holy and she is not; because He is the Rabbi of the true religion, and she is a pagan from the wrong religion. (b) Secondly, she called Him the “Son of David.” She knew Jesus was more than just a Rabbi—He was the Christ. That which the Jews (Jesus' own people) didn't recognize, she did! And yet, her first attempt was rejected.

2. Approach, “Intersession.”

Since Jesus did not reply to her, she changes her approach: she talks to His assistants instead. Which, by the way, was the protocol: the master (boss) is often busy, and his assistants should filter the requests that come to him.

The disciples “interceded” for her—but instead of saying “have mercy on her,” as she requested, they said the opposite: “send her away because she is bothering us.” It's

important to notice that the same hypocritical spirit of the Pharisees and Scribes—“unless you wash (traditions)”—was acting on the disciples.

So here Jesus intervenes. For her sake, He engages in a conversation with her. Though, He still doesn't give her what she was asking for. He says, “I was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel.”

3. Approach, “Diplomatic Answer.”

Now that she got a word from the Lord, she felt confident to approach Him even closer: she worshipped Him. And as she worshipped, her words became fewer: “Lord, help me.”

Now she was thinking that Jesus would be favourable to her—after all, she “bypassed” the disciples, and she is at the Master's “office,” speaking to Him privately—she even worshipped Him! Why would He not answer her?

But to her surprise (and everyone else's!) He did not heal her daughter. Jesus' answer is “by the book.” (Remember last sermon? The lips that play by the book, but the meaning of the book was already gone?) Jesus is basically saying that according to the book, He owes her nothing, and He has no obligation to give her anything. He is only obliged to His own nation—Israel. (Thanks be to God, Jesus “goes beyond the book,” for He is love!)

4. Approach, “The Treat.”

I have to be honest: if I were her, I would've given up in the beginning when Jesus did not reply to her request. And if ever I were persistent enough, this would be the place I would've given up. Just because I wrestle with that weird feeling many of us battle with: “God doesn't want to bless,” “it is what it is,” “there is a reason why He won't do it...”

When Jesus said that it wasn't right to give the table's food to the “puppies,” that's it—I'd have given up! But this lady teaches us why “great is her faith!” She says, “even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table.”

- First, she takes the humble spot in the story. The table is for the Israelites, the sons of Abraham. She is okay with the leftovers at the lowest place.
- Secondly, she is basically condemning the religious leaders, who—though sitting at the table with the Bread of Life available to them—refuse to eat from Him. The Jews rejected Christ, tossing His blessings off the table, and it falls straight into her lap. What the Jews rejected, she by faith received.

Jesus gave her the request she asked for! Her daughter was healed. And her faith was commended—from the mouth of our Lord, He said, “great is your faith.”

This passage functions as an encouragement to many mothers who daily pray for their children's salvation.

Some people get confused with the term Jesus used here, "the dogs..." It is important to notice that had Jesus not wanted to bless her, He would not have been there in the first place! He went there with the sole purpose of blessing her; and the "restrictions/conditions" He imposed on her are nothing but a vivid picture of the whole relationship between God and humanity: we don't approach Jesus because we deserve, but because He is merciful.

Her faith is the opposite of the Religious Leaders' faith. They thought they were the gatekeepers of the Kingdom with their traditions and ceremonies that separated people from God's Kingdom. She, on the other hand, humbled herself before God. She didn't demand. She didn't try to deserve. She didn't give up. She asked for mercy—and it was granted to her.

Charles H. Spurgeon puts it in a vivid image: when Jesus refused to reply to her request, she said—He hasn't said no. When Jesus replied to her "harshly," she said—He gave me a word; next He will give me a deed. When He called her a "dog," she said—I am close to Him; the dog has a place in the house; surely He will give me the crumbs falling from the table. With such a great faith, she would never be refused!

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For further studies, 3 essential biblical words in order to grasp the meaning of this text:

"Little dog" (κυνάριον). Had Jesus called her a "dog," things would've been very weird. By using the expression little, the lady understood Jesus was inviting her closer, not rejecting her.

"Crumbs," "treats," "morsels" (ψιχία). The food idea is of a snack/treat that purposefully we give to the puppies. A fool meal it would make the puppy sick; a treat makes its heart joyful.

"Satisfied," "fulfilled" (χορτασθῶσιν). The paradoxical message behind a small treat producing a huge satisfaction testifies for how great her faith was, and how great our Lord's power is.