

## Mark 7:24-37

### “Doing All Things Well”

Of course we wouldn't expect anything else out of Jesus, He's not like us, He doesn't do things and depending upon how He's feeling He may do some things well, other things so so or halfheartedly. Any and everything Jesus does, has done, or will do He does well, that is everything He does He does in a commendable way, doesn't leave things undone, word (found in Vs 37) speaks of excellence, honor and no room for blame, Jesus covers all the bases and is rightfully deserving and worthy of our praise.

Most of you know that I wasn't up here teaching last week and so by way of review to sorta refresh your memory Jesus has been speaking about what constitutes true *cleanness* before God. Cleanliness *is* next to godliness *if* you understand what it means to be clean before God. and In short it's not the removal of the filth from the flesh, but the answer of a clean conscience before God, which is to say it's not the outer man that God is concerned with so much as it is the *inner man*. It's not the outward *ritual* that God is looking to, but the inward *reality*.

The Jews in Jesus' day had basically come to the point whereby they seemed to believe that sin could rub off on you like cooties; that you could catch the “sin” virus and could be contaminated by what/who you came into contact with. You're in the market, you buy something and the vendor gives you back some change and you don't know, maybe a Gentile, a sinner had held that money before you did; you better make sure and wash off when you get home, don't touch your eyes or your nose before you get there or you might be infected with sin. (Perhaps tell story about last Sunday's sewer experience, pray for Jane no one will assume accountability, but I'm telling you I didn't want to touch my eyes or my nose until I'd been thoroughly cleansed, didn't know what kind of virus or bacteria I may've come into contact with. That's the way the Jew seen contact with a Gentile, so they would go through these ritual cleansing rites whereby they washed themselves a certain way so as to be considered clean again before God.)

Well, the Pharisees noticed Jesus' disciples not going through the ritual cleansing rites before they ate. As far as they were concerned they were defiled then before God, so they challenged Jesus on that point. and As you may recall Jesus launched into an all out assault explaining and demonstrating to these guys exactly what true holiness, what true cleanliness before God is. and It has nothing to do with what goes into a man, that is, what a man eats, or if he doesn't wash his hands just right. It's not what goes into him that God is concerned with, it's what comes out of him that's the problem, for from within (Vs 21) out of the *heart* of men proceed evil thoughts. So that before God the heart of the matter is a matter of the heart.

Now, I want to take just a minute here and consider a little more fully these Vs here (Vs 21-22) whereby Jesus is explaining the kind of things that defile a man. Not so much defining *what these things mean*, I think most of us are well able to understand what adultery is, what fornication and murder are, what it means to be a thief, or a liar, what's entailed in moral foolishness. So it's not *what these things mean* that I want to highlight but rather *how these*

*things happen*. I don't want to really move on without underscoring it because I think it's important for us to see so as to get a grip on it by the grace of God.

It is imperative that you understand real time actions (the actual happening of things like what Jesus has listed here) are actually hatched, or birthed out of the thought process of the mind. Actions begin in the mind. The bible says, "...*when desire (or lust) has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*" James 1:15 Where is desire, where is lust conceived? It's conceived in our minds, in our hearts; and from there it brings forth, or gives birth to sin.

When a thought enters your mind initially it's not sin, in all honesty sometimes thoughts seem to crop up in our minds at random. We weren't thinking about it, didn't have a line on a certain process of thinking, but out of the blue some hideous thought comes into your mind. It's at *that point*, what I decide to do with that thought that makes or breaks whether or not it becomes sin. Do I immediately take it and turn it over to the Lord, bring every thought into the captivity of Christ? Or do I entertain it a bit, think about it, roll it around in my mind and in my heart?

It's out of the heart that these actions spring forth, you don't engage in adultery if you haven't entertained it in advance in your mind. You don't steal something without thinking about it 1<sup>st</sup>. You don't spontaneously murder somebody in cold blood, you've thought about it before hand. You guys that's why there's such an overwhelming emphasis in the scriptures that's placed upon the mind. We're told, "*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,*" Rom 12:2 We're told, "...*we have the mind of Christ.*" 1 Cor 2:16 and Again, "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*" 2 Cor 10:4-5 We're told to set our *mind* on things above, not on things of the earth, Phil 4:8 says, "...*whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.*" On and on we could go, it's not what enters your stomach that defiles you, it's what comes out of your heart, it's what we entertain in the inner man that's the problem.

and As we mentioned last time these are the kind of things that are basically resonating and permeating in a person from birth, they only grow and develop from there. We're born with a problem; it's called a sin nature. Many people think that when a person sins they become a sinner; that's not true. You're already a sinner that's why you sinned in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, the fact that you sin only proves that you're a sinner. and We're born with the sin nature, that's why the word of God tells us that we have to be what? *Born again*, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, we're to be born again as by the Spirit of God through faith in Jesus Christ

What an important lesson on what it means to be clean before God, it's not about the outward, it's about the inward, it's not about relying upon what we *do*, we're to rely upon that which *Christ has done* for us. Trusting in Him for the remission (that is the forgiveness, the cancellation) of our sin debt before God.

## Vs24-30

Matthew adds additional details, let's leave Mark's gospel momentarily and make our way to the gospel of Matthew Ch 15 (Vs21-28)

As we've mentioned before it seems that very few things ever impressed the Lord about this world, He didn't marvel over Roman military might, or the ingenuity of man, He never looked at creation as something that awed or overwhelmed Him. But every now and then He was taken back and blown away by a person's faith, either their lack of it, or the abundance of it in an unexpected place, in an otherwise unexpected person. This happened to be one of those times that Jesus was blown away by a person's faith. and Once again it's not the faith of an Israelite, or a religious leader, but rather the faith of a Gentile, and a woman at that.

Now the only reason that I highlight the fact that it was a woman's faith is because this was a male dominated culture. The fact that she was a Gentile was already working against her; the fact that she was a Gentile woman placed her even lower on the social totem pole. and We can't help but be face with the question once again, which side of the spectrum are we more closely associated with?

Would the Lord be blown away at the faith we exhibit in otherwise adverse circumstances; or would He be blown away at the lack of faith we demonstrate considering how good He's been *to us*, His word He's recorded *for us*, how He's never left nor forsaken us, has always been there on behalf *of us*, yet we still struggle really trusting Him?

We read in Vs 24 that from there (that is most likely Capernaum) He arose and traveled north about 40 miles into modern day Lebanon around the city known today as Beirut, there in the region of Tyre and Sidon. Which is to say that He was deep into Gentile territory, and there are a couple things we can kind of glean from that though ultimately it seems simple the reason He went there. We have to keep in mind that Jesus just gave an extensive exhortation regarding being clean and unclean before God, and that you weren't defiled by things outwardly, but rather the position of your heart inwardly. and It's almost like He's underscoring that reality now by leaving the Galilee area and going up into the area of the Gentiles into a region known for just about anything but it's faith. As a matter of fact Jesus used the cities of Tyre and Sidon as an example of ungodliness when He was condemning Chorazin and Bethsaida saying that if the works were done in Tyre and Sidon that were done in those cities that they'd have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. So this wasn't an area known for it's godliness, but will Jesus be defiled by being there? No, it's not about what's around me, it's about what's within me.

We also see in this a bit of a prophetic foreshadowing in that being rejected by His own nation Jesus will go to the Gentiles. Now that overplays a bit what Mark is stating here, but it's a truth we can see in this nonetheless. Right now (in the text) Christ's ministry is primarily toward the Jews, they will reject Him as a nation, then He will go to the Gentiles who will be much more open and receptive to Him (after the cross through the work of the church).

However, practically it seems to me that the reason Jesus retreated so far north is that He simply wanted some rest for Him and His disciples. Remember He tried to get a little rest back in Ch 6 but wound up being thronged by thousands of people. Things haven't slowed down much since then and so it seems as though His strategy is to retreat into Gentile territory and perhaps there He'll be able to be away from the multitudes; "He entered a house and wanted no

one to know it.” He’s just seeking some Rand R, trying to fly below the radar; but notice, “He could not be hidden.”

We love that phrase. Christ *can not* be hidden; sometimes we try to hide Him don’t we? Man we do our best, but if Christ is in your house, if He’s in your life He can’t be hidden. It’ll surface; people will find out He’s in there, there’s no such thing as a closet Christian, if Christ is in your life it’s only a matter of time, people will find out; because He can’t be hidden.

We find out that a woman sought Him out whose young daughter was demon possessed. and Really she becomes a picture for us of intercessory prayer because she made her daughter’s need her own, and she sought the Lord personally on behalf of another faithfully.

and There’s just so much to take in and grow by in this event. According to Matt she initially was calling out to Him according to His messianic title, “Son of David.” Now this woman is a Gentile, she has no idea what she’s saying or what it means to employee this title, she’s probably heard that it’s how the Jews refer to their Messiah, but it’s not by any means personable to her. She’s probably addressing Him in a way that she hopes will appeal to Him, but it’s not really a personal thing to her in addressing Him that way. and How did the Lord respond? Total silence, He answered her not a word, she’s calling out, and crying out, begging and beseeching, and He doesn’t even acknowledge her.

Then to add insult to injury the disciples (probably encouraged by His silence) urged Him to send her away. “Lord, this woman is getting on our nerves, get rid of her.” You see there in Vs 26 where we read that she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. That’s exactly what it means, she didn’t ask Him once or twice, it was over and over and over again, “Oh Lord, Son of David, please, Son of David, please have mercy.” Over and over again she wouldn’t let up.

Jesus didn’t even respond. Why? Was He being rude? No, listen Jesus sensed something in this woman, it was her faith, and like turning a diamond in the light to enjoy every facet He begins to turn her, and display her, and draw out of her what’s deep down in her. Believe me when I tell you that Jesus is doing a much deeper work here than what it appears to be on the surface. Have you ever been praying, seeking the Lord, pleading *with* the Lord and only gotten silence in return? What’s the deal there? Is Jesus being rude? Not at all, I suggest to you that Jesus is doing a much deeper work, drawing things out of you, sifting the dross out of you and refining your faith.

Teaching us patience, teaching us persistence, she came *to* the Lord, expected a response *from* the Lord and wouldn’t leave until she got one, she was going to seek Him, and seek Him, and seek Him until He responded to her. Jesus said, “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*” **Matt 7:7** The words, “Ask,” “seek” and “knock” being in the present tense and in the imperative mood meaning basically that Jesus is commanding us that we ask and keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking, be persistent in your prayer life. Look at Luke Ch 18 (Vs1-7)

The idea being that if an unjust judge would do the right thing if persistently pursued, how much more will God take care of His own who pursue Him night and day? Turn back to Ch 11 (Vs 5-8)

I wonder how many prayers fall just short of God’s response because we don’t see an immediate result so we just give up. Listen; if something is heavy on your heart you won’t stop

seeking the Lord. There are people I prayed to come to Christ for 17 yrs, now they're in Christ, I wouldn't stop, why? It was heavy on my heart.

This woman was pursuing Jesus over something that was heavy on her heart and she wouldn't stop. What was it? The well being of her daughter; mom, dad, listen, pray and don't you quit praying for the spiritual well being of your children. Satan had a stronghold on this little girl and she was seeking Jesus to break that chain and to set her free and she wasn't going to quit until she seen her daughter freed from the stronghold of Satan. Believe me when I tell you that Satan wants your kids, maybe you're secure, he can't get to you, don't think for a second that means he'll not bother your kids, pray and pray, and keep praying for them.

Jesus didn't seem to respond at 1<sup>st</sup>, when He did respond He seemed only to offer up more discouragement. He says, "I've been sent to the lost sheep of Israel." Another turn to watch the radiance of this jewel of faith He's found in her. She presses on; getting even more desperate she casts the formalities aside, drops the "Son of David" line, gets on her face before the Lord and says, "Lord, please...help me!" You can almost see the smile begin to form of the face of Jesus. He says, (Vs 27, read).

Now it's true that when a Jew called a Gentile a dog it was derogatory, in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries it's common to see scavenger, mange dogs that are just gross and unclean. and Generally when a Jew referred to a Gentile as a dog it was in that context, however not here. That why your NKJV has the word "little" in front of it, because the diminutive is used.

Jesus is referring to the domesticated household puppy, He's not insulting her, He's giving her something to grab on to, and she does, notice Vs 28.

#### **Vs28**

She engages Him with His own words, and that had to bless His heart. Jesus is saying, "Listen, I've come to the children of Israel, I have to be concerned with their needs 1<sup>st</sup>, it's not good to take the bread from the children and give it to the puppies under the table." and She says, "I recognize my place Lord, I'm not asking for priority, but don't the puppies eat the crumbs that fall from the table at meal time?" She's asking the Bread of Life to just toss her a crumb. and What does the bible say? *"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him."* Rom 10:12 Matthew tells us that Jesus commended her for her great faith. and We reading Vs 29

#### **Vs29-30**

The one who comes to Jesus He will by no means cast out, He worked with her, challenged her, and I'll guarantee you that by the time she left Him He'd *changed* her. Few quick notes and we'll move on.

I've already pointed out her persistence, but there's much, much more about her prayer to think through and be encouraged and /or challenged by. What else do we note about her prayer? It was *passionate*; she was *pleading* with the Lord. James said, *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* James 5:16 Listen, if *you're* not passionate about it, if *your* heart's not heavy with it why should the Lord's be? She was persistent, she was passionate, what else? She was specific; she wasn't praying in generalities, she brought a need to the Lord specifically. What else do we note? Her prayer was brief. Jesus was very clear that we shouldn't think we'll be heard because of our long prayers, the length of prayer has no bearing on the *strength* of prayer. God is in heaven, we're on earth, we're to let our words be

few. She was respectful, she was rational, she looked *to* and relied *on* God's mercy, she humbled herself and took her lowly place before the Lord. She didn't get all, "Who are you calling a dog? I've never been so insulted in all my life, I'm out." She was just all, "Lord, if you say I'm a dog, I'll take it, I'm a dog, please just throw me a crumb." Wasn't prideful, she was humble, and finally her prayer was full of faith.

The "crumbs" of God's grace can do incredible things in our lives; she came to a point where she realized that it wasn't going to be because she rubbed the magic lamp in the right way, "Son of David" that Jesus responded to her. His work on her behalf would be nothing less and nothing more than pure grace. So to with you, so to with me.

One final observation, faith mingled/coupled with humility is a powerful combination before the Lord. Some people have 1 but not the other, some people have great faith, so they name this, and they claim that, and it's almost as though they're bossing God around. Where's the humility, where's the place of lowliness in your heart? There's no humility there, others know they're dirt bags, and so they're always cutting themselves down, living defeated lives; where's the faith? Where's your confident persistence before the Lord? We have to have faith, Remember Heb 11:6? *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* The faith has to be there, but herein lies the balance, *"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."* James 4:6 Come to God full of faith, in lowly humility, be persistent and passionate, simple yet specific and you'll watch God move and He'll do awesome things on your behalf.  
Vs31-32

Perhaps you recall earlier on in the gospel of Mark Jesus delivering a demoniac and the people of the area freaking out because the herd of swine that ran off the edge of the cliff and drowned?

and He begged Jesus to go with Him but Jesus said that he should go tell his friends, his family how the Lord had shown mercy to him. and We read that he told people of the great things God had done for him in Decapolis (these 10 cities) and all marveled. Well, now Jesus has come to that area, and no doubt in part (at least) to that man's faithfulness, these people are now eager to see Jesus. Jesus wants to use our lives to prepare people for His coming to them, that they might be prepared to receive Him when He shows Himself to them.

He's still in Gentile territory, and this guy is a great picture of who we all are before we have a personal encounter with the Lord, we're deaf *to* Him, can't speak or communicate *with* Him, this guy was both miserable and hopeless. Unable to hear when people spoke, couldn't communicate with them when he wanted to. and In another portrait of intercession these people bring him before the Lord.

**Vs33-37**

To me this is mind blowing, it's not something you see everyday. Jesus takes this man aside (more than likely to keep this man from feeling like a circus side show), He sticks His fingers in his ears, spits, touches his tongue, looks up into heaven and sighed. What in the world is going on here? One thing is for sure, you can't put Jesus in a box, sometimes He laid hands on people, other times He didn't, sometimes He simply spoke the word, in the situation we just read He didn't, sometimes He healed on the basis of the person's faith who was afflicted, other times He healed on behalf of another's faith for them. My point is this; God is

free to move in whatever way He should so choose. We're all about the formula, 1<sup>st</sup> do this, then do that, and that gets results. Jesus might just make mud, stick it in your eye and then have you wash it out to heal your blindness, He might stick His fingers in your ears to heal you of being deaf, you just never know how God's going to move. and That's good, it gives us the liberty to just say, "God have Your way, whatever You want to do, however You want to do it."

But I also think that Jesus was getting on his level, Jesus likes to get on our level, to the leper, He touched him, ministered to the deep need of his heart. and Here Jesus is in a manner signing to this man. He can't hear Him so Jesus places His fingers in his ears to let him know He's about to do something for Him, He spits and touches his tongue to let Him know He'll soon be speaking again. Now, some versions make this seem as though Jesus spit on his fingers and then touched the man's tongue with His own saliva, that may or may not be. Either way the implication was that his tongue would be loosed. Then He looked up into heaven communicating that what was about to take place would be the work of God. and Then He sighed, indicating His heart felt compassion for the man. His prayer to God, His grief regarding the fallout of sin upon mankind, Jesus heaves with sorrow over the destructive nature of sin in our lives. and It's not that because this guy sinned he's this way, it's that God didn't create us with the intention of having us suffer various ailments and afflictions. That's the result of the fall, and it grieved Jesus' heart.

After getting into this guys world Jesus utters a word (probably in the man's native tongue) "Ephphatha" or "Be opened." and Immediately the man's ears were opened and the impediment of his tongue was loosed.

Now, the word Mark chose to use that's been translated "impediment" in Vs 32 is interesting. Used only here in the NT, it's the word "Mogilalos" used only one other time in the entire bible and that's in the Septuagint in the passage found in Isaiah which says, "*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb (Mogilalos) sing.*" Isa 35:5-6 and The passage is speaking of the way things will be when the Messiah is on the scene.

Mark wants us to know Messiah is here, that Jesus is the Messiah and these are the benefits of His reign.

and Jesus told them to keep quiet about it, but they just went berserk over the whole thing, told everyone. Jesus didn't want people pursuing Him simply because of His works, He wanted to minister His word, the works were good, but the good news of the gospel is even better.

Vs37

and That's where we began, Jesus does all things well. There's no halfhearted work from Christ. Now we stand to represent Christ, can this be said of us? As we reflect Christ do we do what we do commendably, excellently, leaving no room for blame? Jesus does *all things* well both in creation, but even more so in redemption, opening the ears of the deaf to hear His voice, loosing the tongue of the dumb to sing His praise. We who were dead in sin and trespasses have been made alive in Christ; by grace we've been saved.

If you've been blessed, and received the benefits of His redemption, praise Him for it, if you need to receive the benefit of His redemptive work of the cross, don't delay, don't put it off another day, receive Christ today.

Prayer Points:

Lord we thank You for Your work of redemption on our behalf. For opening our ears to hear Your voice, loosening our tongue to sing Your praises, You do all things well. Lord help us to be submissive to Your desire and direction for our lives, to recognize our lowly place before You. To move in faith, mingled with humility, to learn to pray passionately and persistently, seeking You wholeheartedly. and May we be bold in our witness of You, not trying to hide You, but letting our light so shine so as to glorify You in all that we do.

If you're not sure that you're where you need to be with Jesus. You've not had that encounter where He opened your ears, loosed your tongue, came into your heart and forgave you of your sin, then today is the day. You can have His healing hand be upon your heart, your life, don't kick against the goads, don't resist His call, come to Him, surrender to Him, receive life *from* Him today.