

Isaiah 49:1-6**The Servant of the Lord**

49 Listen to me, you islands;

hear this, you distant nations:

Before I was born the Lord called me;

from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.

² He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,

in the shadow of his hand he hid me;

he made me into a polished arrow

and concealed me in his quiver.

³ He said to me, "You are my servant,

Israel, in whom I will display my splendour."

⁴ But I said, "I have laboured in vain;

I have spent my strength for nothing at all.

Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand,

and my reward is with my God."

⁵ And now the Lord says—

he who formed me in the womb to be his servant

to bring Jacob back to him

and gather Israel to himself,

for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord

and my God has been my strength—

⁶ he says:

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant

to restore the tribes of Jacob

and bring back those of Israel I have kept.

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,

that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

Mark 7:24-37

Jesus Honors a Syrophenician Woman's Faith

²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁸ "Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

²⁹ Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."

³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man

³¹ Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means "Be opened!"). ³⁵ At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

It would be good to have your **Bibles opened** at – Mark 7:24-37

There’s an **outline** for you to take **notes**. Let me **pray** first.

Let’s pray...

Intro

As many of you know I was born in Ireland and raised as a Roman Catholic (RC) – doing all of my schooling in RC schools in England.

Living in a predominantly Protestant country, I experienced a lot of ridicule and bullying for being an Irish Roman Catholic – and with the troubles in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Roman Catholics going on at the same time – I copped lots of abuse – things like - “***go back to Ireland, you IRA bomb merchant***’ Obviously things were much worse in Northern Ireland.

During that period 60s-90s – it was sheer hatred – and it was hard to see a time when both groups could live peacefully together.

This type of hatred was nothing new.

A similar thing was going on Israel at the time of Jesus – 2000 years ago!

The Jews hated Gentiles (non-Jews) and did not associate with them because they **saw the Gentiles as unclean** – and it had been going on for centuries!

[Slide-Unclean]

Last week Jesus broke the Jewish cultural barriers about clean and unclean food and declared all food clean!

In this week's passage Jesus breaks the barriers about clean and unclean people!

The Jews called other nations **GOYIM** – Other Nations = **Gentiles**

In fact Jews called Gentiles – **DOGS** - a very derogatory term

A bit like in Australia – we'd call someone – a mongrel!

In our passage this morning – we have

1. An "Unclean" Syrophoenician Woman (verses 24-30)
2. An "Unclean" Deaf and Mute Man (verses 31-37)

Let's see how Jesus deals with them

And then we'll finish up with some ways **we can apply Jesus' teachings to our lives today**

1st then – An "Unclean" Syrophoenician Woman

An "Unclean" Syrophoenician Woman (vv24-30)

We pick up the story in verse 24 as **Jesus enters Gentile territory**

The region of Tyre

[Slide-Map]



It's clear from verse 24 that Jesus wanted time out because it says He didn't want anyone to know he was in the house in Tyre.

Remember His ministry work has been intense for some time.

But one woman has found out Jesus is in the house

And she has a huge problem – her little daughter is possessed by an impure spirit.

This woman is a Greek born in Syrian Phoenicia

She's desperate – she falls down at Jesus' feet (verse 25) and begs Jesus to drive out the demon from her daughter (verse 26)

This woman is breaking all social and religious barriers – she's a woman approaching a man – AND – she's a Gentile approaching a Jew!

In Matthew's version of the story – the disciples tell Jesus to send her away because she keeps crying out to them!

But Jesus needs to teach the woman and the disciples a lesson about “*unclean*” people.

[Slide-Unclean woman]

In verse 27 Jesus says something quite outrageous – “*First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.*”

Jesus first highlights the current social norm

Jews see Gentiles as dogs as we said!

It’s a derogatory term – but Jesus lightens the sting of the word – by using a word that means “*little dogs*”

Jesus is basically saying to the woman – you know I’ve come for God’s people Israel first and foremost – and you know the Jews see you as little dogs – and I have to feed God’s children before I feed you!

He’s also highlighting to His disciples – that this is a harsh way to treat non-Jews – calling them dogs – and you realize – you disciples – I’ve also come for these people you refer to as dogs.

The woman understands what Jesus is saying – she knows her current place – she’s second priority to the Jews

She could have said to Jesus – ‘who do you think you are – calling me a dog!’

But she’s humble and full of faith – and also quick witted!

Her reply is gold!

She calls Jesus “*Lord*” – she knows Jesus can help her and will help her!

She says “*even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs*”

Basically – the woman is happy with Jesus scraps!

Jesus scraps are still better help than any human being can give her!

Jesus rewards her faith and tells her “*For such a reply, you may go, the demon has left your daughter*” – Jesus heals her daughter from a distance – no words – no touch - are necessary!

Isn't it a neat twist that the Syrophoenician woman stands for the Gentile (Non-Jewish) world which so eagerly seized on the scraps of bread from the Bread of Heaven – Jesus – which the Jews – the children - didn't want to eat and rejected and threw away!

Because of the woman's faith in Jesus – Jesus performed yet another miracle and got rid of the demon inside the woman's daughter...

Isn't that a picture of what Jesus does for each person who comes to Him! He gets rid of the evil – and sin – and rebellion – inside each one of us. When we throw ourselves at Jesus feet – for mercy – and say please help- I'm sorry – please forgive me – HE WON'T TURN ANYONE AWAY.

(pause)

Jesus hasn't finished with unclean Gentiles yet!

2nd – we have **An “Unclean” Deaf and Mute Man** – vv31-37

An “Unclean” Deaf and Mute Man (vv31-37)

Jesus travels from Sidon to Tyre (further North) and then south-east to the Decapolis (10 cities) region.

[Slide-Map]



And again there is **great faith shown by the Gentile people** in the area - **they bring a man who is deaf and who could hardly talk** – and again they begged Jesus to heal the man – v32

Look how Jesus heals him:

[Slide-“Unclean” Man]

- **Jesus takes him aside privately** — Jesus removes him from the crowd, making the healing a personal, intimate moment.
- **Jesus touches his ears** — A physical sign pointing to the area needing healing.
- **Jesus spits and touches the man’s tongue** — In the culture of the day, saliva was sometimes seen as having healing properties, but it is **a tangible sign of Jesus’ intention to restore speech.**

- **Jesus looks up to heaven and sighs** — A prayerful act, **expressing dependence on the Father and a sigh of compassion for the man’s suffering because of the fallen broken world we all live in!**

Why does Jesus **use physical gestures**?

- **Jesus allows for the man’s limitations** — The man could not hear Jesus’ words, so Jesus’ touch and visible actions communicated what was about to happen
- For someone cut off from normal communication, **physical contact would make Jesus’ action personal and reassuring.**
- It was also **symbolic** - touching the ears and tongue, spitting, and sighing - **all dramatize the opening of what was closed and the restoration of what was hindered.**

Then Jesus – verse 34 - says the Aramaic word “**Ephphatha**” which means “**be opened**” – and another miracle – the man can hear and speak again!

The **words “be opened”** are also **symbolic**: Everyone’s ears need to be open to hear the Good News of Jesus – that He died for our sins to be forgiven and rose from the dead – so we can go to Heaven

Everyone on this planet needs their hearts open to the Good News of Jesus.

Then in verse 37 – there's the response of the people. They are overwhelmed with amazement and say about Jesus ***"He has done everything well – He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!"***

They recognize Jesus' power and authority – not just in healing - but in the way that Jesus restores and makes whole again!

Jesus' actions echo what Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 35:5-6

⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened

and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer,

and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness

and streams in the desert.

As our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 49 tells us – God promised a servant some 700 years before Jesus came

God says this about this promised servant...

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant

to restore the tribes of Jacob

and bring back those of Israel I have kept.

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,

that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

This promised servant is of course Jesus

And God is saying through Isaiah – my servant’s job of restoring the tribes of Israel and bringing them back to God - is too small a thing – this servant of mine will also **be a light to the Gentiles.**

Jesus is fulfilling this promise as He goes to Tyre and the Decapolis!

(pause)

Here’s three things we can take home today – from these two Bible passages...

Applications to take home

[Slide-App 1]

1. 1st - Jesus doesn’t care about boundaries – whether they are geographical, ethnic, gender, or theological. Neither should we care about such boundaries.

We can show the same compassion Jesus showed to all people!

We must NOT write people off – Jesus never did! Jesus is God’s Messiah – He is available to all people

[Slide-App 2]

2. 2nd - Is our faith as strong and as desperate as the Syrophoenician woman’s faith? Are we so desperate for Jesus to help us with someone or something – that we will be so bold as to humble ourselves – ditch our pride – ditch our prejudices – ditch our doubts – and beg and continue to beg to the Only One who can help us – until help is granted? **Isn’t it because the woman can’t be fobbed off so easily and the fact that she won’t give up – that Jesus grants her request to heal her daughter?**

[Slide-App 3]

3. 3rd - Jesus has the power to heal us of our sin and rebellion against God – He has the power to open our eyes to see who He really is, to open our ears to hear His Word, to open our minds to understand His Word – and to open our hearts to accept Him into our lives as Lord and Master. **As we believe in Jesus – the Apostle**

Paul says – we become a new creation – 2 Cor 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Let's pray

Lord Jesus, thank You for showing us that no one is beyond the reach of Your mercy. Strengthen our faith like the Syrophoenician woman's faith—so that we are humble, bold, and persistent. Open our ears to hear Your Word and loosen our tongues to speak Your praise. Please open our hearts so we can follow You with compassion and courage. In Your name we pray, **Amen.**

Benediction (Romans 15:5-7)

⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶ so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. **AMEN.**