

Kings Norton Baptist Church(Wharf Road Chapel)

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020 10 am

The faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman

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Welcome and new coronavirus instructions.

Opening reading Ps 48:9,10, 47:7,8

Hymn MP 476 My Lord what love is this

Scripture Reading Luke 4:14-30

Prayer

Communion

Reading 1 Kings 17:8-24, Matthew 15:21-28 (Mark 7:24-30)

Hymn MP 465 Meekness and majesty

Sermon Genuine Faith Acts

Hymn MP 258 I am trusting thee Lord Jesus

Closing prayer

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).

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*Welcome, pray*

■ Ever been in a baking hot and dry desert? Imagine you are struggling for survival, you are desperately thirsty, with swollen lips parched mouth, you stagger along on your last breathe. The desert is Nevada's Amargosa Desert. You are on a very long and seldom-used trail when you come across an old pump. In a baking-powder can wired to the handle is a piece of paper offering you the only hope of drinking water It says: "This pump works but the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock is buried a bottle of water. There's enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one-fourth and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You'll get water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. The instructions continue 'when you get watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller. (signed) desert Pete. P.S. Don't go drinking the water first. Prime the pump with



it and you'll get all you can hold." Keith Miller and Bruce Larson, The Edge of Adventure.

Well what would you do? It's a test, a test of faith, would you believe what is written – or drink from the bottle? Short term or long term?

Today we are looking at Faith, signs of genuine faith. – and asking the question: “Is your faith genuine faith?”

The passage is found in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. It starts with the phrase “**21 Leaving that place, - that being around lake Galilee - Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.**

First some basic questions: Where was it that Jesus and his disciples went to?

See map – They went north west towards these two coastal cities. However, Jesus said: **I am sent to the lost sheep of Israel**, Jesus never went out of Israel. It says Jesus went into the **vicinity**, that is he went to the borders of Israel.

What about this woman - Who was she?

This woman has no name. She is **22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity.** They are the original inhabitants from the coastal region of Palestine. Mark says **26 The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia.** The Phoenicians were the ancient sea fearing peoples that stretched along the south eastern Mediterranean coast. This lady was a Phoenician of Syria, Syro-phoenician as distinct from Liby-Phoenician or Carthaginian.

What is the significance of that?

Canaan and the whole area were notoriously godless, pagan, worshippers of idols and false gods. It is here this woman is born and brought up and lived. Here there is no prophets of God, there's no word of God. Everyone is making their own way in life, making the most of life without any reference to the true God.

A bit like the UK has become. A sign the other day “**all we have is each other**”. The UK has again and again chosen to turn it back on God and systematically removed God's good laws. The result? - a huge increase in evil behaviour with all its miserable consequences. The worse result is that God's word becomes rare, God's voice is rarely heard, God speaks less and less. So millions live without hope without God in this world.

So this woman, like them, had everything against her. She was far from God....

### So how did she know about the God of the Bible and about Jesus?

How did she know about the God of Israel? How did anyone outside of Israel know?

Well the news had spread, right from days God took Israel out of Egypt with such a demonstration of miraculous power that all the neighbouring nations heard of it. Balak king of Moab shook in fear when he heard what the God of Israel had done. Rahab in Jericho said **we have heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt and when all the kings... heard about these things—those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the ... Canaanites, .... they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel.**" Jos 9:1-2.

So the surrounding nations watched on through the reigns of the various kings up to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Now in recent times there were rumours – rumours that their promised Messiah had come, someone who again performed amazing miraculous signs.

However maybe there was one lasting local tradition that still had people talking. And that was a woman whose son was brought back to life many years ago. It had happened right here in their midst, in Zarephath (see map) between the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Here Elijah had raised a boy to life.

When you read the passage (1 K 17) what is the main point of the account? Faith. Faith. When she told Elijah that she had just enough flour and oil for one meal before she died. Elijah said “take that bread an oil and make a cake for me, then the Lord will give you all you need.” What would you do? S or L term. What does it say next? **She went away and did as Elijah had told her.**

✚ **That is faith. The whole point to the episode is to show her faith.**

So Jesus commends this woman for her faith **You have great faith!** key v.28

### *What are the signs of - Genuine faith?*

Well here are some things it is not:

1. Faith is not a substance AV. Faith is not something in and of itself.
2. Nor is Faith like Polyfiller, to fill in the gaps – in those areas you are ignorant faith fills in. that's were faith takes over, No
3. Nor is faith a leap into the dark, nor is it a feeling, nor is it something kept away in the medicine chest and quickly turned to in an emergency, to help you through those unexpected accidents or situations. No.

Faith is in me but looks to an object outside of me. It could look to me, and many have faith in themselves, Some even say they pray to themselves!

The object of this woman's faith is Jesus Christ.

✚ **A - She knows who he is B - She trusts in what he can do x2**

To know the truth about who Jesus is - but not to trust him is to leave your knowledge as purely head knowledge. That is completely useless

■ Like knowing which pills to take to save your life –but never taking them

**Faith is more than mental assent, it's personal trust, P commitment, P reliance**

Conversely to trust someone that you don't know is foolhardy, how do you know whether he or she can help you - or he has the power to do anything?

■ Con artists display our faith – I've been caught out with bank account - perhaps you as well, we act because we trust. That is how they work

This woman calls him the **Son of David**. She, like the blind man sitting by the gate of Jericho, can see who Jesus really is. He's the One promised, the one all the prophets point to.

Notice she calls him **Lord** 3 times. Ah you say Jesus warned about those who say “**Lord, Lord**” and it means nothing – Let's see what it means to her.

### *Genuine faith acts*

**In fact, as soon as she heard about him, ....She came and fell at his feet.** Mk 7:25

✚ **So faith acts, it does something on the basis of what it knows.**

■ If I say “there's a wheel loose on your car” – you act

■ If I say “you've left your keys in the front door” your there like a shot.

This woman acted on her belief, - she has a great need, - she knows who it is who can do something about it – so she acts. the **woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet.**

There is action. Genuine faith as James reminds us is shown to be genuine because it results in action.

■ Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again -- until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other. William Booth in The Founder's Messages to Soldiers, Christianity Today, October 5, 1992, p. 48.

Do you say you believe Jesus is Lord? That he is God come in the flesh?, that he died for sin and rose from the grave – Then that must change things. To affirm the truth of that in your mind must = repenting of sin, trusting Christ for your life now your health, finances etc., and for eternity. Do you declare him Jesus Christ as Lord? If so it will show in that it is His Kingdom that is now the burning priority in your life. And that you leave him to take care of all those other important things, as he has promised to do.

Just before this passage there's the run in with the Pharisees. They were hypocrites, their faith in God was a pretence. Here's the contrast, "don't be like them, all polished on the outside - but still unchanged on the inside."

Straight afterwards is the episode at Bethsaida with its faithless inhabitants – who had all the evidence of the miracles, - but did nothing about it.

Paul reminds us **if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord,"** to be saved you must also **believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,** Ro 10:9 i.e that all God's purposes are now in Him. Jesus said if you say you **love me,** it will show if **you obey what I command.**" Jh 14:15 i.e love, trust, holiness

Jesus wants to show the disciples the genuineness of her faith - so he puts her off!

Hinder someone in something - then you see their true heart! Right?

- E.G. Stand in a bus queue, when the bus comes – turn and try to stop someone getting on – you'll end up in a ruck!

We live at a time when it is harder to do the things we normally do.

- The Covid pandemic has been a sifting time for many, including Christians. Keeping up the disciplines of bible study and prayer even when no-one is watching. Being away from church and not 'having' to join in – it is easy just not to bother.
- Now churches are opening there are a number who prefer to stay at home. Why? Is it protection against the virus? It tests the heart.

Some attenders here who profess faith - where are they? They know we are open, why are they not in touch? They don't have to - so will they? It's a test of their profession. While a member of the body of Christ will see the importance of being with other members, - those who aren't – won't!

When this woman burdened in heart came to **Jesus He did not answer a word** The disciples put her off "**Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us**"<sup>x2</sup>

We try to lead people to Christ, to the church to hear the word of God, we do bible studies urging the listener and respond. But how often it is one step forward - and one step back – how often nothing comes of it. The reason? There is no inner change. There is no inner spur, there's no evidence of the workings of the Holy Spirit like a fire in the heart. No Genuine Faith Those who have that you can't keep away. They are not too busy, they don't make excuses: appointments, workmen, visits, my children, DIY etc. etc.

If you want something – you will find a way. **Where there's a will.....**

- I remember having little money but a very thirsty 6 litre American car, I always found money for petrol somehow I made it happen. Beans ...

So too when it comes to serving Christ. If we want to - we find a way

- On mission teams with churches. It's often a test to see how many of the church join in for the week. Northampton I think, a young mum with toddler was always there for everything through the week, the little boy crawling around as we pray..

There's no need no push and cajole those who love Christ - they will be there - come rain or shine. They will be there. Waiting early by the door, eager, is that you? *That's evidence of Genuine Faith*

When Jesus <sup>24</sup> answered, "**I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.**" Did the woman go off thinking maybe I was wrong, maybe it's not for me No.

<sup>25</sup> **The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.**

Mark adds **She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.**

There is genuine faith. Genuine faith does not give up it pushes and persists.

'**Help**' is a good word. I'm not able, I need help, I'm not worthy, be merciful, **Lord help me.** For true ....

*Genuine faith is humble.*

Jesus said <sup>26</sup> "**It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.**"

A dog – They were not cuddly pets as we often see them. No dogs were untamed, dirty and wild. To call someone a dog was an insult, it still is an insult – that's what the Jews, in their aloofness called the gentiles, **dogs.** <sup>x2</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "**Yes, Lord,**" she said, "**but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.**" What a humble response. She is willing to own the title

It reminds me of **Mephibosheth** who **bowed down** before King David and said: "**What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?**" 2Sa 9:8

Quite, what did Mephibosheth have to bring? Nothing, He was a cripple, summoned from Lo Debar on the edge of Israel far away, - like this woman - and from the defeated household of Saul he expected only death. But David like Jesus extended to him undeserved grace – and he spent the rest of his days eating at the King’s table!

27 "**Yes, Lord,**" she said, x2 "**but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.**" So this lady, in her heart she is down on her knees, I will take any crumbs of grace, like those scavenging dogs, I will be glad of anything. I will be glad of anything. And so she receives...

### *Genuine faith receives*

The widow all those years before trusted Elijah the man of God - she trusted his God and the result of her faith? **there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family.**" 1Ki 17:15

So too this Syro-phoenician woman **You have great faith! Then Jesus told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."** She **went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.**" Mr 7:24-30

So was the result of her **great faith!** - If you come to Christ believe he is who he says he is and trusting him alone - you too will receive. You will receive. This is the Jesus who said **whoever comes to me I will never drive away.** Joh 6:37

✚ Faith is to believe - the reward of faith is to receive what you believe.

### *Two concluding points....*

Firstly God desires that you find Him – and secondly he comes to get you.

Was she the first heathen convert to Christ? The first in a long line of many.

God’s desire has always been that those from the farthest ends of the world would be included – he wants you, a long way from Israel and many centuries later to be included. Christ died for the sins of people from across the world. CROSS. blood sufficient for anybody, whatever you have done..

✚ Turn from your sinful life to Christ and he will forgive your sins and will give the gift of faith. Genuine Faith is the gift from God,

In the sea of unbelief God has his people. In the midst of darkness there are pockets of light. Can you think of some? Ruth Naomi and Boaz, Mordecai

And you? Is that you? Is that how you feel? Do you feel surrounded by unbelief and those who have no love for God, yes even in your home.

This woman, surrounded by those who don’t believe as she does, she goes against the prevailing view, she makes up her own mind. This is not general belief, no this is her personal living faith in her Lord. OK if I’m the only one, Ok if I’m the only one in the family - I’m going this way, I’m sticking with Jesus – for I know he will stick with me. Jesus is so very trustworthy.

This lady, with no name is a story of unlikely faith, from an unlikely place. The Lord is saying to all of us – there you are you see – it is possible. She did - so can you. Faith in Christ means you can. **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.** Faith replaces ‘can’t do’ with ‘can do’.

Not only does God desire you to come to faith – he comes to get you.

Zarephath is mentioned once in the NT, by Jesus at Nazareth in Luke 4 who said: **“There were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time ...Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.”** Lu 4:26

Why does he say that? The Lord sent Elijah there, - (see map) – Elijah who was at the Kerith Ravine goes all that way to one place far up in the north west. Why? Because God had his person there, this widow. So too Jesus with his disciples journey the considerable distance to Zarephath, why? Because God had his person there. Jesus went there to show everyone just what his Spirit can do in the most unlikely, and most underserving.

This woman is commended for her faith. – but behind it is the working of God by his Spirit. The wind blows where it will, so too with the spirit of God – and we don’t know to whom he will go – until we see is the evidence of it. As Jesus said **All that the Father gives me - will come to me,** Joh 6:37

And those that do - show the evidence of the inner call. Do you know it?

- When Christ prompted Cannon Street Memorial church in Handsworth to plant a church in Kings Norton it is because he has his people here. So today Jesus searches out the lost in KN, why has he brought you here? Because he is calling you to trust in him. Will we see the evidence of genuine living faith in you – as was so evident in this woman?

A humble faith, a persistent Faith, a receiving faith, genuine faith that shows

✚ God our Father has made all things depend on faith so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing. Martin Luther. \_\_\_\_\_end