

Mark 7:1-30

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] a warm welcome to the service this morning. Visitors, good to see a few visitors with us and you're especially welcome and if you're able to please stay behind for tea and for coffee at the end of the service. The intimation sheet you'll receive at the door and the intimations have been on the screen. If I could highlight a few of these. First to say the Gaelic service tonight is at six and that will be led by the Reverend Rory Morrison. I think we'll just say a wee word to encourage people to come to the Gaelic service. I'm conscious that the vast majority of those who come to the Gaelic service are the older people in the congregation and yet I'm conscious that some of you have Gaelic. I wish I had more but some of you have Gaelic and it's a good chance to be able to come out and even if your biblical Gaelic is maybe not very sharp it's only over time as we come together.

In worship at that common. So be encouraged young and old to come to the Gaelic service at six tonight. Afterwards at half past seven the youth fellowship will lead the after church fellowship and Nigel Kenny of the Christian Institute will come and he will be speaking at the fellowship there. He'll speak about some of the challenging issues in the world that we face as Christians just now and especially for the younger people how we can be encouraged in our faith. In the course of the week you see the usual things ladies Bible study wrote to recovery prayer meeting and all are welcome to these and what's not on the sheet is that there's an elders prayer meeting tomorrow at seven. I'll say that again as two come through the door. There's an elders prayer meeting tomorrow at seven to eight o'clock here and so please take note of that. The services next Sunday will be led by Angus McKellar in the morning and Dan Marig in the evening. I'm conducting a wedding in the mainland on Saturday next week and then I'll be on holiday for a week after that. So in that period if you need a minister speak to one of the elders or Rory Morrison who'll be on standby. New cleaning rotas are ready for collection. I presume that they're out in the rest of you so please pick one up and the holiday club there's dates there for the holiday club if you're able to help with materials please add your name to the list at the porch also. A date for your diary is the Congregational Barbecue 22nd of June and there are two more things I think. One more thing actually and that is that there is an information on my phone. Excuse me one second.

There's two more sheets in the vestibule. If you are prepared to lead the summer Sunday school in the holiday period please put your name and details against one of the dates. If you're willing to help in the Sunday school then you can add your name to the sheet marked helper and tick the dates you'll be available. So for those who are able to help with Sunday school and the holiday Sunday school please indicate that on the sheets at the vestibule and just thank you very much for those who do week by week teach the children and those who in the holiday period take the time to teach the children the truth of the gospel and we pray on for that work. These I think are all the intimations. Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's bow our heads and close our eyes and let's speak to God in prayer. Our Heavenly Father we thank you for this privilege that you've given us. We thank you that in this place at this time whether we are old or whether we are young we can come to you and we can speak to the God who made us and the God who loves us and the God who calls us to come close to him.

We thank you for this gift of prayer. We thank you that we are promised that when we pray in faith you are the God who who hears our prayers and who answers our prayers. We know that sometimes we fill up our prayers our block that they're not going anywhere and we confess Lord our sin. We know that you've said to us in your word that if we harbor sin in our hearts you won't hear our prayers but we thank you that we can come at the beginning of this prayer and confess our sin. We are sinners in our nature. We are sinners in the things that we do.

But we thank you that you are a God who has promised that if we confess our sin you are faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to purify us from all unrighteousness.

[5 : 12] And we thank you that when our sin is forgiven, when we are saved, we are not only saved from the penalty of our sin but we are saved into a relationship with you where we can come to you as children to a father. We thank you that Jesus taught us to pray and said when you pray say our father.

And what a wonder Lord it is for us to be able to come to the holy God. The God who is all powerful. The God who who made everything and who holds everything together. The God who is the judge and king of the king of the universe. And yet we are able to come to you in the name of Jesus trusting in the finished work of Jesus and calling you our father. We thank you Lord for prayer that we are able to speak to you and pour out our hearts to you. We thank you that you are the God who speaks to us. We see your creation around us and it speaks to us of your majesty and your power. And we have your word which we have sang which we will be reading. And we thank you that you speak to us through your word and you show us who we are and you reveal to us who you are. And even in the psalm that we have sung Lord we we see ourselves. We see that we are the person who is sinking into the mud and the mire of our sin.

We are the people who are in need of saving. But we thank you that as we wait upon the Lord as we call out to you in faith you are the God who loves us and who who reaches down to take hold of us and to lift us out of danger and to place us in that place of security. And in that picture we thank you that we have the gospel. We thank you Lord that you have reached down to us in Christ for God so loved the world that he sent his son. We thank you that Jesus came from heaven and condescended to us in this world. We thank you that he lived for us. We thank you that he died for us.

And we thank you that as we look to him in faith as we call upon the name of the Lord we are promised that he will take hold of us and lift us into a relationship with the God whom our hearts long for.

So help each one of us Lord we pray with the psalmist to wait upon you to call out to you and to worship you as the God who is our Savior. We pray for anyone this morning who is not yet in Christ.

[7 : 59] We pray for anyone this morning who is here but who is not yet safe in Jesus. Lord we pray that you would enable them each one who is here to see that we are sinners who are in danger.

And we ask Lord that you would open our eyes to see Jesus as Savior. We pray that you would stir our hearts that we would take hold of the promises of the gospel and that we would call upon the name of the Lord so that we would be saved.

So hear our prayers Lord and help us, enable us to worship you in spirit and in truth. Help us Lord as we pray both audibly and silently.

Help us in our singing to truly sing praise to you and not to allow our minds to wander off to different places. Help us as we read the word of God to have a sense of expectation that you will speak to each one of us Lord.

And we ask that in our hearts we would respond in faith to the God who calls us. So hear our prayers and help us this morning. We pray for all who meet like we do in different denominations in this place and we ask that you would bless them and that you would speak through your servants in different places.

[9 : 21] We pray for a land wandering from you and we ask that you would draw us back. And even as we see the political confusion in our land, it doesn't surprise us Lord as we know that wisdom comes from heaven.

And when we look away from heaven we are in a state of confusion. So help us we pray to be humbled as a nation, to repent and to turn back to you.

Be with those who are grieving Lord. Again in this past week we are conscious of those whose hearts are sore. And we ask that you would comfort them and that you would strengthen them.

Continue Lord to draw near to those who are housebound and who are sick and who are suffering. And Lord we ask that you would continue to progress your work across the world.

We thank you for Nurse Marian back with us today. And we pray for the country that she's left behind again for a period. We pray for Malawi and ask that you would continue the work that you have begun there.

[10 : 26] And that many more would turn in faith to Jesus. So hear our prayers, take away our sin. And we ask all these things in Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls would you like to come out please?

How are you all today? All good? All good? I'm going to tell you a story today. I don't have anything in my hands to show you.

But I do have something on the screen to show you. So you come this way. It's a wee story about Romania. This is where the people from Romania get all a bit nervous again.

I gave you pictures. Do you know what we were building out in Romania? Not many of you were at the evening thing.

But those who were will know. And those who don't will see. What do you see up there? It's a slide. What kind of a slide is it? It's a water slide.

[11 : 26] So yeah, that's... We got there. And the first job that we had to do when we got to Romania was there was an old slide made out of bits of fiberglass.

And it was all a bit broken and it was a bit sharp. And some of the children who'd gone down it had cut themselves on the sharp edges. So they said, we want you to rip out that old slide.

So that's the first job we had. We had to rip out the slide. And then we were told, there's another slide that's there and we want you to put it together. And it's exactly the same as the old slide.

And you can just pop it in the trench that was there before. That's what they said would happen. Do you think that's what really happened? No. There's nothing like the old slide. It's actually two slides.

A red slide and a blue slide. And so we had a look at it and we decided from the two slides we thought we would try and make one slide.

[12 : 24] So after lots of huffing and puffing and scratching of heads, we put this slide together. And there's a few pictures I think, Alan, isn't there? There's that one there.

There's another one there. Some of the children, the children were told not to go on the slide. There might be one more picture, is there? But one of the children is disobedient. Do you recognise who that is?

Where is he sitting? Let's all point at him. Don't slide on the slide, they said. It's not secure. Taffy, get off that slide.

But it was secure enough to hold your manners. And so, anyway, what I want to tell you about when we were working on the slide, the technical people were figuring out how to get it all working together.

The people who were not very technical, like me, were given a shovel and told to dig. And Farrakhar was my boss. And so, we were digging a trench to try and put this thing in.

[13 : 28] And it was okay when we started digging, but the ground was quite thick, you know, like clay. And then, the weather got worse and worse. And it was as bad as it is outside today.

And the rain came down, and it came down harder and harder. And we were there with our shovels and we had to go inside. So we went inside for 20 minutes until the rain stopped and it was thunder and lightning.

And then when we came back, out, the place that Farrakhar and I had been digging was all filled up with water. So we were having to try and scoop the water out and then we were trying to dig again.

Now, what happens when you've got mud and then you've got water? It's not super soft. Pardon? It goes soggy. It goes soggy, yes.

You can't take it out. It goes super soggy and it's very hard to take it out. So we were digging and we were trying to pull it out and we were there in our wellies and our shorts and our wellies were good.

[14 : 30] Deeper and deeper into the mud and we were trying to get our feet untrapped and there was a little boy there called Daniel and he decided he would try and help us.

Didn't he, Farrakhar? And Daniel got hold of a struggle and he started to try and do his work and he was there with his wellies and we were saying, careful Daniel because it's very, very soggy.

that Daniel was listening and he stepped into the mud. What do you think happened next? He got stuck.

Right to the top of his wellies he got stuck and he started going like that and he couldn't move and he started to get stressed and he was saying, I'm stuck.

How do you think you were like? Do you know what he shouted next? He shouted exactly that.

[15 : 39] He went, help! I'm stuck! And one of us, I can't remember who it was, we went and we got hold of him.

Don't take hold of my girl here. and we tooled him until he was right out and he was safe.

Daniel was stuck. He couldn't save himself but he had to call out and ask somebody else to save him. Were you listening to the words of the psalm that we were saying at the beginning?

Do you remember what it was about at the beginning? He said in a psalm He said in a psalm He took me from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay and on a rock he set my feet Who do you think that's speaking of?

God. Yeah. He took me from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay. What do you think that's about? God. It's a bit quite helpful that's good.

[17 : 07] What do we get stuck in that we can't save ourselves from? Sin. Sin. And we start to sink and we start to sink and some people think oh they can save themselves and they come up with all kinds of religions to try and save themselves.

Some people even think the things that they do will be enough for God to say well you're fine. The Pharisees taught that but we can't save ourselves.

So just like Daniel what do we have to cry out to God? Help. And who comes to be our saviour?

Jesus. So boys and girls young and old let's make sure that we cry out to Jesus and we ask him to help us.

And be our saviour. So let's close our eyes and speak to God in the air. Lord we thank you for the pictures that you give us in the Bible that speak to us about the danger that we're in and yet the fact that you in love save us.

[18 : 26] And we thank you that just like Daniel in that story that we had today just like he was sinking when he cried out for help we know that the sin that's in us and the sin that's around us it makes us sink and it puts us in great danger.

But we thank you that you haven't left us Lord to sink into our sin forever that you came to us in Jesus. And we thank you that he is the one who promises that he will help us and he will lift us out of sin when we cry out help to him.

We thank you that Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for our sin. And we thank you that he has promised that if we just cry out to him he will save us forever and we are put into that secure place which is Jesus himself.

So be with us we pray and we ask that all the boys and girls and every one of us here would cry out from our hearts help so that we would know Jesus as our saviour and we ask God this in Jesus name Amen.

Thank you boys and girls. As the children go remember you pray for them and let's turn now in our Bibles to Mark chapter 7 Mark chapter 7 and we'll read from verse 1 of the chapter this is God's word.

[19 : 59] The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were unclean that is unwashed the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing holding to the tradition of the elders when they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash and they observe many other traditions such as the washing of cups pitchers and kettles so the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with unclean hands he replied Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites as it is written these people honour me with their lips but their hearts are far from me they worship me in vain their teachings are but rules taught by men you have let go the commands of

God and are holding on to the traditions of men and and and and and he said to them you have done a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions for Moses said honour your father and your mother and anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death but you say that if a man says to his father or mother whatever help you might otherwise have received from me his corban that is a gift devoted to God then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother thus you nullify the word of God by your own tradition that you have handed down and you do many things like that again Jesus called the crowd to him and said listen to me everyone and understand this nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him that makes him unclean after he had left the crowd and entered the house his disciples asked him about this parable are you so dull he asked don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean for it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach and then out of his body in saying this

Jesus declared all fruits clean he went on what comes out of a man is what makes him unclean for from within out of men's hearts come evil thoughts sexual immorality theft murder adultery greed malice deceit lewdness envy slander arrogance and folly all these evils come from outside and make a man unclean 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 in fact as soon as she heard about him a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet the woman was a Greek born in Syrian Phoenicia she begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter 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 their dogs yes lord she replied but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs then he 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 may

God bless that reading of his word to us if you could turn now your bibles please to Mark chapter 7 and let's pray as we go there our heavenly father we thank you for the promise of that psalm that we have just sung we thank you that there is the offer that our hearts can be made as white as snow we thank you that even though our sin makes us stained like scarlet we have the promise that we can be made white as snow when we look in faith to Jesus we thank you Lord for that psalm that points us forward to Jesus and we thank you that he is the savior and we ask that as we turn back now to the word of God that we would know the help of the Holy

Spirit so that our eyes would be opened and our ears would be unlocked and that we would be enabled to see and hear and know the presence of the risen Christ and what we pray for ourselves here Lord we pray in a special way for the children we thank you for them and for the grasp that they have of the basics of the message of the gospel we thank you for the teachers you have helped them to be able to see that and we pray that as they do crafts and as they sing and as they learn the stories of scripture that you so help us we pray help them we pray enable us Lord to know your presence with us cleanse us from sin empty us of all that would fixate upon ourselves and fill us with the Holy Spirit we pray so that we may have an encounter with the risen

[25 : 55] Christ and we ask this in Jesus name Amen Wednesday morning for me was a particularly frustrating morning I'd been in Edinburgh for a couple of days and I was trying to get home and yet at every stage of the journey as I endeavoured to get home there seemed to be confusion I had a ticket for a plane that was going from Edinburgh to Storn away and the ticket had a time on it that told me when the plane would be leaving but the plane was delayed I got the text as I walked through the door of the airport the plane was delayed so the time was wrong and then I got to the airport and the board that meets you when you go in through security that gives you all the times of the planes taking off and the gates it said that the gate for this flight would be advised at 9.30 and so

I kept coming back to this board and then at 9.35 five minutes after the time the same message was still on the screen but no gate was advised and eventually after a bit of a hassle we took off and we made our way home and as we were coming in to land it was just a bit bumpy and it seemed to be going swaying a bit from side to side and it just seemed to be a different kind of landing to usual and we landed quite a distance further away on the runway than we would normally have landed and then as the pilot tried to navigate back towards the terminal building it was making clonking noises the plane like my car had been making after I broke the spring on the way to Stornway two days earlier and as he was turning right the plane didn't seem to be going right so we all looked at each other and said nothing and then after five or ten minutes probably the pilot came on and said actually over the course of the flight there had been the development of a minor steering problem with the craft and although we had landed it wasn't possible to actually direct the craft back towards the terminal building so we weren't able to get off the craft we couldn't cross the runway by foot we just have to wait for five more minutes for the bus to come and ferry us off the craft five minutes wasn't five minutes though the bus had five spaces and there was about 50 people on the plane or whatever and so an hour later it was before we got back to the terminal building and the point I'm trying to make is there were lots of messages at every stage of the attempted journey but none of them were accurate they were confusing at best and they were deceiving at worst and that takes us into the passage that we're studying in Mark chapter seven and I think before we go there I maybe ask

Amman to turn me down a wee bit am I a little bit too loud some of you might want to turn me off but just a wee touch down would be good so that takes us into Mark chapter seven that sounds better Amman thank you and I want to look at this chapter under three headings ask three questions and then work through the answers as they're given to us in the passage the first question is what deceives a person and the answer to that question is false religion what deceives a person false religion that's point number one the second point is what defiles a person and the answer to that question is our fallen sinful nature and the third question that we'll come to is what delivers a person and the answer to that that we see through the side of

Phoenician women is faith in Jesus so that gives you the structure of what we're looking at for the next 25 minutes so first of all what deceives a person and the answer to that question is false religion and as Mark chapter seven really gets going we read from the beginning of the chapter the focus the spotlight in Mark seven at the beginning is on the Pharisees and teachers of the law and they had come from Jerusalem verse one and they were gathered around Jesus and they weren't gathered around Jesus because they had a love for him or an interest in him they were gathered around Jesus because they hated him already and they were looking to try and trip him up and trap him now who were the Pharisees and the teachers of the law well they were the most religious people that were in that place at that time they were religious and they were very exercised in their religion they weren't the kind of people who came and did one hour's nominal service their whole lives were immersed in the religion that they believed they were very exercised in their religion they were very active as members in this religion they were very sincere in the religion that they followed they were very serious they weren't frivolous in the religion that they had taken hold of but the fact is they were very wrong today the general teaching that we hear and that is taught to our children is as long as you have some kind of religion and it suits you and you're comfortable with it then that's fine that's the teaching of our day that's what's pressed upon us and that's what's drummed into our children it doesn't matter what religion you take hold of as long as you like it and it suits you it's fine just be content with that now the

Pharisees they had religion and it suited them down to the ground they were enthusiastic to the max about this but it wasn't fine it wasn't fine with Jesus they had teachings they knew their teachings they believed their teachings they taught others their teachings and others followed them in the teachings that they had taken hold of but they were false teachings and they were deceived in their religion about how to be saved they were deceived about how to have peace with God and they were deceiving others through their religion that's why if you go through Mark's gospel or any of the gospels one of the things that you'll see

[33 : 49] Jesus doing so regularly is clashing with the religious leaders he doesn't clash with anyone else to the same extent as he clashes with the religious leaders Jesus strongest words are always reserved for those who held high office in terms of religion he was against them and they were against him and the reason that Jesus spoke so clearly against them was because they were deceiving people about how it could be possible to be saved they were sending people on the wrong road in terms of how to get to heaven there's only one way to get to heaven and it's not through our high performance religious rituals whatever ones we may take hold of it's through the perfect righteous one Jesus Christ that's how we get to heaven

Jesus said in John chapter 14 verse 6 I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me Jesus said I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father no one gets to heaven except through him you know that is a verse that is becoming more and more dangerous in our nation in this culture to speak out it's hate speech some people will say we need to see and be crystal clear on the fact that it's not hate speech that verse is love speech that verse is truth speech and if we love people and if we care for people in a society that is confused like ours we will have the courage to actually speak this out no matter what the cost

Islam is a growing religion in our country but it's a false religion Buddhism is a false religion the Jehovah's witnesses who come to our doors and speak to us they are false witnesses who are offering us false religion liberal theologians who may stand in assembly halls dressed up with every bit of clerical garb but tell us to move away from the Bible and who take us away from the finished work of Christ and his cross they are false teachers they are deceiving people into going the wrong way no matter how well dressed they may look in a ministerial sense and we need to see that and in this pluralistic culture that we find ourselves in we need to have the courage to gently and respectfully and yet lovingly and courageously and clearly save us we could have sung the hymn this morning there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin he

Jesus only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in and any war any religion any philosophy any way that says anything different to that is deceiving a person what deceives a person false religion the second point second question what defiles a person the answer to that is it's our fallen sinful nature I don't know have you ever had a car some of you only seem to drive new cars but have you ever owned an old car where the body of work is starting to get a bit shabby and a bit tired what do you do in that situation well you can wash and polish the car and you can get a touch up paint brush and you can just see the bits that are starting to look a bit brown and shabby and you can touch it up here and there every few weeks but give it a few more weeks again and the brown marks are starting to come back through the rust is starting to show again and the reason for that is the problem is not coming from outside of the car it's coming from underneath the paint it's coming from the inner shell rust is not something that jumps up from the road that we can brush off rust is rust is coming from the inside of the car and it's spoiling the look of it from the inside out and that's like us we have a problem and the problem is it's not something that lives outside of us it's inside of us now the

Pharisees they they didn't get that or at least they wouldn't accept that they thought they were clean they thought they were that they were God's people and so they washed and they scrubbed their hands so they wouldn't become unclean and they refrained from eating certain kinds of food and letting that food pass through their lips into their bodies because they thought that food would make them unclean and they wouldn't come into contact with or engage with certain types of people because they thought if they came under these influences and if they had contact with these kinds of people that would make them unclean but Jesus told them and he tells us the problem is not on the outside it's on the inside and it's called sin it's part of our nature and it has been ever since

[41 : 07] Adam just as in some families like mine a physical heart problem is something that can be hereditary and it can pass through the generations down the line for us the spiritual heart problem that originated with Adam in the fall in Genesis 3 it passes on to all of Adam's children not some of his children not just the unlucky ones but to all of his children Romans chapter 3 and verse 10 says there is none righteous no not one not one soul in this room this morning that is righteous not one not me not you Psalm 51 and verse 5 says surely

I was sinful at birth sinful from the time my mother conceived me some people seem to have this idea that babies are born in a state of perfect innocence sinless and it's only as they're exposed to things in the world that they become sinful it's not what the Psalm says that's not what God our maker says we're sinful from birth it's part of our nature it's our spiritual DNA it's not that we we sin and because we sin we become sinners because of the sins that we do it's because we are sinners by nature internally that we sin externally and so the evil thoughts the sexual immorality the theft the murder the adultery the coveting the wickedness the deceit the sensuality the envy the slander the pride and the foolishness that is spoken of in verses 21 and 22 they don't they don't infect us as we come into contact with what's outside of us this is not something that's on the outside that we have to try and navigate through life to avoid this is something that's inside of us this is what's defiling us

Jesus says in verse 23 all these evil things come from within they defile a person you go to the hospital you go for the scan you wait for the results of the scan we can't see what's happening underneath the skin and the consultant gives us the results he delivers the news well you know here are the results of the spiritual scan of my own heart what does God see he says evil thoughts of what I see sexual immorality theft murder adultery coveting wickedness deceit sensuality envy slander pride foolishness that's what's within do you believe this do you and I see this and accept this you know if we see this and if we accept this it's because

God the Holy Spirit is doing a convicting work within us there are armies of people who will shake their fists in rage at such teaching but if we see this of ourselves it's because God the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and he shows us our sin as the mirror of God's word is held up to us and he shows us our sin in order that he can lead us to our saviour if we don't see our sin why would we need a saviour but when God shows me my sin I have to seek out a saviour God shows us to use other words the fact that we are defiled in order that we will look for deliverance so how can we be delivered how can you and

I be saved well there's no point in us speaking to the Pharisees about this they can't help us with all their hand and pot and kettle scrubbing they can't help us to know where to look for deliverance but the side of Phoenician womankind that takes us to a final point what delivers a person and the answer to that question is faith in Jesus what deceives a person false religion what defiles a person it's the fallen sinful nature that's in all of us so what delivers a person well faith in Jesus the soapy waters of religion can never can never deliver us from sin but the blood that Jesus would shed that's where there's deliverance so like this woman we must come in faith to Jesus so let's just in the few minutes that we have to finish look at how this woman comes in faith to

[47 : 26] Jesus and let's look at her faith the first thing I want to note in respect of this woman is we meet her with a sad story it's all begins for this woman with a sad story her faith is set against that backdrop the woman's girl her daughter is sick she's spiritually sick she's possessed by an evil spirit it says that the literal Greek word that's used is an unclean spirit which is a carefully chosen word when we're looking at the Pharisees and their obsession over cleanliness this woman she has an unclean she has a daughter with an unclean spirit and so this is dominating her life she's facing a sad story she has a dark providence to deal with and that's what drives her in seeking Christ and very often that's the case we've seen that in

Jairus in the previous chapters we've seen that in the woman with the issue of blood they've got sad stories and that's what caused them to come looking for Jesus and there are people in this room and their testimonies which we've heard they have begun in a sad place a desperately sad place and yet it's in that sad place that they met Christ so if there's anyone here today who is going through a hard time if there's anyone here this morning who finds themselves to be in a sad place then let's learn from this woman let's seek Jesus seek Jesus so it starts with a sad story the second thing we see here about this woman is she has a surprising faith sometimes we talk about people being born with a silver spoon in their mouth and what we mean is they're born in a position of privilege they're born with cash in their family they're born in a line of aristocracy or something like that they're born with a silver spoon in their mouth they don't have to work hard to get things now you could say that the

Pharisees spiritually speaking they were born that way they were born with a spiritual silver spoon in their mouth they were Jewish by nationality they were God's people they had the scriptures they had all the rituals of religion that pointed forward to the promise of a saviour these were signs they weren't the means of salvation they were pointing forward to the one who would come to save so the Pharisees they have every reason to recognise and to trust Christ they have great spiritual privilege this woman by contrast she's born with no silver spoon she isn't one of the Jewish people she's a Gentile she didn't have any of their privileges she didn't have a Bible an Old Testament she didn't have the signs pointing forward to Jesus she didn't know much about Jesus but when she saw him only for a moment it seems when she heard about him she has a surprising faith that he can help do you have a

Bible in your home did you grow up attending Sunday school were you taken to youth fellowship did you have parents and grandparents who prayed for you and who told you about Jesus and his love if that's the case you and I have been born with immense spiritual privilege let's be careful like the Pharisees we don't misuse these privileges I can think of some people I've spoken to even here who tell me they couldn't possibly come in faith to Christ why not I say well because I don't know enough yet I don't know enough yet this woman knew nothing other than the fact that Jesus could help her if she came to him she has a surprising faith the next thing is she has a seeking faith sometimes we watch the athletics and the television and one of the really impressive races that we can watch is the hurdles these athletes are careering at high speed towards the finishing line and there's all these hurdles that I couldn't get over with scaffolding even and they're leaping over these things as if they don't exist one over the other until they cross the line now this woman seems to me she has so many hurdles on the track to faith her background is a hurdle verse 26 the woman was a

Greek she was born in Syrian Phoenicia she wasn't one of God's covenant people but it didn't put her off her lack of knowledge as we've said already that was a hurdle she knows next to nothing about Jesus doesn't put her off she's a woman in that culture and the one that she's seeking help for is her daughter not her son and one of the commentators Saintly Ferguson says that this was a combination of need beneath the dignity of a true rabbi they weren't interested in women another hurdle for this woman and yet it doesn't put her off Jesus initial response is a hurdle Mark doesn't tell us he's in too much of a hurry he always is but Matthew tells us that when she first comes to Jesus there's silence he doesn't speak to her sometimes that's her experience in prayer isn't it we come to Jesus we have a concern we have a worry and initially there's silence this woman teaches us to persist she doesn't see that as an obstacle she carries on she persists in the direction of Jesus the disciples response that Matthew tells us of as well that's a hurdle when she comes to

[55 : 10] Jesus the disciples of Jesus say to Jesus we're here for a break send her away and yet she was saying I'm going nowhere it's another hurdle that she's over and then the way that Jesus addresses her it's not exactly encouraging we'll come to that in just a second you know she could have taken offense even at the language that Jesus used she could have thrown a tantrum and say how dare you speak to me in this way and yet she doesn't even though the encounter with Christ in some ways is a hurdle she leaps over it in faith she has a seeking faith you know I think there are some people here who are experts in putting up their own hurdles thinking up reason after reason excuse after excuse for not believing in Jesus this woman puts us to shame she has all the odds stacked against her she has a whole line of seemingly impossible hurdles but she has a seeking faith that takes her over them all the next thing here almost done is she has a saving faith the one word

I think above all the other words in this chapter that sticks in our throats is dog in verse 26 Jesus he likens her to a dog the word in the Greek softens it somewhat it's the word not for a scavenging stray dog which they would have seen all over the streets in that place but it's the word for a pet puppy dog it's a word that he uses it's kind of lost on us in the English one of the commentators Dick Lucas he speculates that Jesus likely would have gone into a house and he paints this picture Jesus was so often acquainted with looking at what was going on around him and telling stories from the pictures that he saw whether it's sowing seed or fishing or whatever and

Lucas says it may be that Jesus went into a house for a meal and the children were sitting at the table and there's a wee dog the family dog just sitting at the side of the table waiting for some crumbs and Jesus takes this picture and he employs it as this woman comes to him but even if that's the case and we don't know if that's the case the language that Jesus is using is still on the border line of being offensive and yet the gospel message begins for all of us at the point of offence doesn't it we sang a hymn this morning how deep the father's love for us how vast beyond all measure that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure you and I are the wretches amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me

I've never known the word wretch to be used in a nice way to wretch is just something that we abhor when our body is trying to convulse to throw something out that's offensive inside and yet that's the word that's given to us in our state it's not a nice word to use to describe us and yet we need to see this that we are wretches before we can receive grace and we can receive salvation we need to see and we need to accept that this is what we are in God's sight our sin makes us wretched and for this woman she needed to see her lowly state she needed to see that she could not earn salvation she couldn't sit at the table and demand salvation from

Jesus but she could ask for it even just a crumb of it and that's what she did and that's what we all need to do we need to accept offended as we may initially be we need to accept that we are not deserving of grace we need to accept our lonely lowly wretched sinful state before God and then ask for the gift of grace anyway that's how we're saved we admit our wretchedness we admit that we are undeserving we accept that but we hold our hands and say can you save me anyway it's by grace we have been saved says Paul to the

[61 : 56] Ephesians through faith and this not from yourselves it is the gift of God can I ask have you asked for grace from Jesus yet do you and I have saving faith let's pray our heavenly father we thank you for your word we thank you that we are saved by grace and that's not of ourselves it's the gift of God and we pray that you would help each one of us to see and accept that we are not deserving of this humble us we pray that we may see that we are sinners who have no right to come into your presence but we thank you that in and through

Christ when we ask for grace we are not driven away as this woman and her daughter were not driven away but we are received and we are saved so help us we pray to come as she came and to receive the salvation that she received for her daughter and we ask all this in Jesus name Amen and now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more Amen