**SERIES 03 (PREACHED IN 1904) - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**01. JESUS AND THE CANAANITISH WOMAN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"Jesus went out from there, and withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon. Behold, a Canaanite woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, you son of David! My daughter is severely possessed by a demon!" But he answered her not a word. His disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away; for she cries after us." But he answered, "I wasn't sent to anyone but the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me." But he answered, "It is not appropriate to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Be it done to you even as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that hour."*

*Matthew 15:21-28;*

*"From there he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He entered into a house, and didn't want anyone to know it, but he couldn't escape notice. For a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by race. She begged him that he would cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not appropriate to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Yes, Lord. Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." He said to her, "For this saying, go your way. The demon has gone out of your daughter." She went away to her house, and found the child having been laid on the bed, with the demon gone out."*

*Mark 7:24-30.*

THE EXCURSION of Jesus recorded at this point in each Gospel was probably a turning aside from the pressure of service, that He might find rest. He had been in Galilee, and turning northward, He crossed into Phoenicia, in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon; and the narrative makes it evident that He went there that He might have quietness. Mark brings this out clearly. "And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it." The force of the word there is not that of determination, but of desire, to escape for a little from the thronging crowds.

At the very beginning we should understand that in crossing the border into Phoenicia, He left the district of His proper operations as the Jewish Messiah, and came into Gentile territory. We certainly cannot follow intelligently the work of our Lord save as we notice how again and again He Himself declared in one way or other, and all His life manifested the truth of the fact that up to a certain period He exercised the ministry of the Jewish Messiah. His very attitude toward this woman proves it. Not that Jesus was ever narrow save with the narrowness which means power, the narrowness which is obedience to law in order that law may become operative in all the fullness of intention. The Jew had come to be narrow with the narrowness of a fearful exclusivism. Jesus Christ was simply fulfilling the first Divine intention which was that through the chosen people blessing should flow out to others beyond. But because the chosen people had themselves departed from the ideals of it was necessary that He as their Messiah should first of all call them back, if they would but hear Him and obey, to the fulfillment of those original ideals; and so presently He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of lsrael." So His mission was exercised wholly within the circle of the chosen people, in order that they might be restored to the place of Divine purpose, and so to the life and light and blessing of those around. And when at last they rejected Him, then He, embodying in His own Person the true ideal of Israel, set them aside, and moved out in the fulfillment of that first Divine intention in blessing to all the nations, for that was the first Divine thought. God said to Abraham, "I will bless thee, and make thee a blessing, and in thee shall all nations be blessed." And all the nations were always as much in the heart of God as was Israel, and Israel was only a channel of blessing.

Now, you will remember that it is written that He entered into a house in these regions of Tyre and Sidon. Many people here had already been down, listening to His ministry in Judaea. It is pure speculation, yet it is very likely that when He crossed the border He went to the house of someone who had been helped by Him before. He seems to have entered familiarly, there was no difficulty, no preparation or request He went into the house in order that He might be hidden. He desired that no man should know it. And then comes that wonderful sentence that flames with glory, "He could not be hid." And why not? Because a woman in great need, a woman outside the covenant, according to earthly birth, found Him. And He refused to listen, or answer, or bless, until she proved that while after the flesh she was outside the covenant, according to the Spirit she was inside. And then He gave her what she asked.

This story is to be taken at our Lord's own valuation. There are many incidental matters here upon which we might look, that are interesting and important, but we must see what our Lord says, in order that we may understand the supreme value of the story. Then we will look at the other matters, but only as they lead up to the crowning climax. As I hear Him speak to the woman finally and say: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt," I gather the supreme matter is that of the woman's faith, and the lessons that we are to learn are lessons of faith. And yet let it be noticed at the beginning that it is vicarious faith, exercised not on behalf of herself, but on behalf of another.

First let us look at the woman. She was a Syrophoenician, and Mark adds, a Greek. Of course by that we are to understand that she was not a member of the Greek nation, but a Gentile, the word Greek being used very generally through the country of those who were not within the Hebrew covenant. Matthew tells us she was a Syrophoenician. For one moment tarry here. It was Philips Brooks who once said, You never can understand the heathen until you watch them at their worship, and you cannot understand the movement of a heathen mind until you know the heathen deity. For one moment remember that this Syrophoenician woman was familiar with Jewish teaching, because geographically contiguous, and was perfectly aware of the great facts of faith, for you notice she called Jesus the "Son of David." The prevailing worship of the Samaritans was the worship of Aashareh, that goddess of delight, who reigned over such vast companies of the human race, and reigns even to this hour under different names and in different places. This woman's whole life had undoubtedly been influenced by the worship of Aashareh which taught that all life was her gift, that every instinct and passion of human life must be right, and that men might unrestrainedly follow these instincts and passions. Very beautiful on one side, that is, to the worshipers to whom no other light had come. And this woman had looked upon her child as a gift of the goddess, and had valued and loved her child as the greatest blessing from the goddess. But in the whole system of this worship there was no consideration of the problem of pain and sorrow and suffering. These simply meant that the goddess had abandoned the one whom she first had blessed. It was a great ideal of religion that religion consisted in happiness and in great gifts, and in the full, tumultuous rush of life. And I can imagine this Syrophoenician woman being perfectly contented and satisfied with her child, as the child had grown up, until there had come the deadly and terrible sorrow. And then as she turned to the religion she believed in for comfort she found none.

Let us look at her as she comes to Christ. The thing that impresses us as we watch her is her love. It is very beautiful, this picture of a heathen mother, and the tremendous power of love working in her. "Behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon!" Now, the whole exquisite beauty of that to me lies in the identification of this mother with her daughter, of this daughter with the mother. Here is a picture of the mother love: the suffering of her child is her suffering, and the need of her child is her need; and as she comes into the presence of Christ she says, "Have mercy on me ... my daughter is grievously vexed." Here is the underlying thing. Along the line of purely natural processes, and not along the line of Divine revelation she is making the pain of another her own. It is vicarious suffering, and she comes to Christ with that great mother love welling up in her heart, "Lord, help me ... my daughter is suffering."

The next thing that impresses us in the story, before the Lord makes His pronouncement, is her will. This is the natural picture: Will dominated by Love. How she presses through all kinds of difficulties! First of all, Jesus had gone into the house. She finds Him there. It is often said that this woman followed Him along the way, clamoring and shouting, and when He went into the house, she went after Him. I cannot find this in the story. I believe when Jesus, tired and weary, went into the house, and desired the door to be closed, this woman came to where He was, and found Him. Here is the persistency of love. She begins with this great cry: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter!" He does not answer her. Just at present we are not asking for reasons, we are not following the Lord; we are following the woman. If we could get these things naturally, and as they really happened, we should find Jesus had gone into the house; she is determined to find Him, and has broken through the disciples who are there, and she comes to Him with the great cry of her the vicarious cry, "Lord, help me ... my daughter, " and He never answers her.

It requires something to go on in such conditions as that. She went on, repeated it, and presently the disciples said to the Master, "Send her away." Did they mean, Get rid of her, we do not like the nuisance of having her there? I think they meant, Lord, give her what she wants and let her go. For observe that the Lord's answer was not directed to her, but to them. "He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." If their request had meant simply, Get rid of her, why did He say that which His answer shows that He understood them to mean? They said, Give her what she wants, Lord, and send her away, and He said, I cannot do it, I am not sent to her. I am only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When I have that view of the case I have caught the disciples' understanding of their Master. They did not dream He could send her away without blessing, and so they said what they knew must be the interpretation of that heart of His, Give her what she wants, and let her go. Now comes that chilling answer, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And then the woman again appeals, appeals in spite of this evident rebuff from Jesus. At last He speaks, and to her. And was there ever anything quite so chilling. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs"? And then she looks right back into His face, and I cannot read it without believing that as the woman looked, the great tears were welling up into her eyes, tears that told of her sorrow and her great pain, - Yes, Lord, that is true. But, Lord, there is something you have not said, true, also, the little dogs and one old-fashioned commentator dared to translate it in this way the doggies eat of the little crumbs that fall from their masters' tables. The little doggies is significant, full-grown dogs were never allowed in an Eastern house of any sort, but the young dogs, the puppies, were allowed there, purely as the playmates of the children. All through the East that is to be found. The moment the dogs attain maturity they are turned out of the house into the streets, but the puppies are allowed inside, to play with the children, and to be possessed by them. Mark where this woman is coming down to. It is quite true that bread is for children, but doggies eat of the little crumbs that fall. How is it she is willing to consent to this kind of thing? Think of her daughter and then you know it all.

And Jesus says, not, O woman, how great is thy love! though her love was great. Jesus says, not, O woman, how persistent and splendid is thy will! though that was true. But He said, "Great is thy faith," and we know if that is the Lord's estimate, it is right.

And knowing that, now it is our business to look at this again, and see that which is to be seen in it. Jesus lays bare for us the secret of her persistence. Not merely determination, but conviction that He would answer. Faith, says the apostle, worketh by love. There you have the whole thing. Love is the great underlying impulse. The persistence of the woman is the working of love, faith is its perpetual inspiration. Love itself will cease to work unless there be faith, and so at the back of this woman's persistence is love as the underlying force, but faith is the working principle. Could anyone have persisted as she did, if she had not seen encouragement in the face of the Master? Take miracle after miracle, and there is none other explanation than that the people whom He blessed saw Him as well as heard Him. What made the man in the Bethesda porches get up when He told him to? If I had told that man to get up and walk, he never would have gotten up.

There was always a something in the presence of the Christ, in His face, and though Jesus that day was silent for a long while, seeming to rebuke that woman, that woman looked into His eyes, and so was sure of Him.

"Great is thy faith," - faith that rested on Him in spite of Him, faith that clung to Him when He seemed to be putting her away, faith that triumphed over all the things that limited Him, until she brought herself into living touch with Him. "As thou wilt," Matthew tells us He says. Mark does not put it quite as graphically as that. Jesus says, That principle of faith has taken hold of all things, the door is open; as thou wilt. It is faith which fastens itself upon Him, and believes in spite of all appearances, and persists because He delivers.

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the doggies." It is a very common thing to say that our Lord adopted this attitude in order to test this woman's faith. This does not seem to square with the Master's method. He is, then, saying things which are not exactly true, in order to test her. If He really is sent to her, and if it really is meet to take the children's bread and give it to outsiders, why does He say this? He is simply stating truths. He is declaring He is restricted in His work, that His mission, so far, is confined to the children of Israel, within the terms of the old covenant, that He is not sent outside to do anything, and that so long as He is there, dispensing the children's bread, He has no right whatever to give to those outside. Our Lord was clearly and definitely declaring His restrictions at the time, and that in the ordinary movement of affairs. He had nothing as yet to say to this Greek woman. I think that this story is covered by that word that once fell from His lips in wonderful soliloquy, recorded for us by Luke: "I have come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I, would that it were already kindled. But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." I am shut up within limitations and restrictions. As though He had said, I have not yet finished the work that makes Me universal Saviour. I am here as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, the Messiah of the chosen people, and I am not sent to those outside.

And yet He gave her what she wanted. He bestowed upon her that which her love and persistence sought in faith. What was this Israelitish nation, not as to the actual condition, but as to the Divine intention? It was a nation built up on the principle of faith in God. There are two elements you find running through your Bible, faith and fear; and wherever there is faith there is no fear. But when faith passes, fear takes its place. Go back into Genesis for illustration. Faith in God is obedience to God, and you have paradise. Failure in faith issues in disobedience, and you have fear, hiding in the garden. This nation was called out and built up on the principle of faith. Abraham by faith turned his back upon his own people, and set his face toward the new and strange land. "O woman, great is thy faith!" In a moment, by her persistent faith, this woman has brought herself into relation with the essential covenant of God, with Abraham. And Jesus Christ does not go outside the true house of Israel when He blesses her. The underlying truth is this, that this woman reached Him upon the principle of that faith that fastened on Him, and fastening on Him, received from Him. Hast Thou said that the children's bread cannot be given to dogs? Very well, then I am of the dogs, it is true, but even doggies may eat of crumbs; and Christ said in effect, when He answered her, That faith lifts thee from under the table, and seats thee at it, turns thee from the very nature of dogs to the child of faith. No longer shalt thou remain there. Here I swing open before thee the doors of the infinite treasure house: "as thou wilt, be it done unto thee."

The world is full of sorrow. The suffering of others is always causing sorrow to the heart. There is enough of God's love in every heart to feel something of the suffering of others, and the deeper the love, and the more of the greater the sorrow in the presence of the suffering of others. This is the picture of a heathen woman, and is purely natural. But to every Christly heart there has come a new sense and actuality of sorrow. The proportion in which you and I are His is the proportion in which the sorrows of others become our sorrows.

The greatest fact about Jesus Christ is that all other people's agony was His agony. What are we to do with these sorrows of others? Oh, who is there here this morning that is not carrying some! What shall we do? Let us take them to Him. But do not forget, Jesus Christ has His limitations. Do not forget that He has to say perpetually, There must be true order in these matters. Prayers that are simply born of selfishness cannot be answered. I cannot communicate my power to any through my prayer until my prayer is devoid of selfishness, and permeated by faith in Him. I am limited to the children. I cannot cast God's bread to the outsider. What then shall I do? Let us remember that the lines of our service are marked here, the great love that moves, the great persistence for which He calls, but the triumph is that of faith in Him. How little we know of vicarious faith, and how much more of it we may know if we will but set our mind on Him, the living Lord.

Here is a message to those in sorrow for others. Some great pain you have borne for years, why not get away to Him with it? Why not go to Him and cast upon Him this morning the burden of it, by identifying yourself with Him in its presence, "Lord, help me ... my daughter is grievously ill." Of course there are the limitations of application. The age in which Jesus says, I am not sent to any save the children, has passed. He is no longer limited. He is sent to all today. But the great principle of this story is the principle of vicarious faith, faith for others fastened upon Christ till it triumphs. And in proportion as we know what it is to live there, and exercise that, we may help to lift the cursed mountain of sorrow that lies upon others, and transfer it from them to Him, Who carries it away, and makes it not to be.