

Mark 7:24-37 “The Strange and Wonderful Ways of Jesus” 7/31/22

Outline:

J.R.R. Tolkien, in The Fellowship of the Ring, “‘Despair, or folly?’ said Gandalf. ‘It is not despair, for despair is only for those who see the end beyond all doubt. We do not. It is wisdom to recognize necessity, when all other courses have been weighed, though it may appear as folly to those who cling to false hope. Well, let folly be our cloak, a veil before the eyes of the Enemy! For he is very wise, and weighs all things to a nicety in the scales of his malice. But the only measure that he knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it. If we seek this, we shall put him out of reckoning.’”

‘At least for a while,’ said Elrond. ‘The road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.’”

1) Dogs and crumbs

Ex. 22:31 “You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

1Kings 21:23 And of Jezebel the LORD also said, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.’ ²⁴ Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat....”

2Sam. 16:9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.”

Matt. 7:6 “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Isaiah 49:6, God says of his servant:

I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

John 4:22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

William Lane, “She felt no insult in the comparison between children of the household and the pet dogs. Instead she neatly turned it to her advantage: the crumbs dropped by the children, after all, are intended for the dogs! Jesus’ comparison is not rejected but carried one step further, which modifies the entire scene: if the dogs eat the crumbs under the table, they are fed at the same time as the children (and do not have to wait). Indeed, let the children be fed, but allow the dogs to enjoy the crumbs. There does not have to be an interruption of the meal, for what she requests is not the whole loaf but a single crumb. The acceptance of the comparison, the clever reply, and the profound respect for Jesus in her address show that her confidence in his power and good will has not been shaken.” (*The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT, 263)

Mark 6:41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were satisfied.

Mark 8:8 And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

Mark 6:52 ...they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Mark 8:17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” ²⁰ “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” ²¹ And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

James Edwards, “What an irony! Jesus seeks desperately to teach his chosen disciples – yet they are dull and uncomprehending; Jesus is reluctant even to speak to a walk-on pagan woman – and after one sentence she understands his mission and receives his unambiguous commendation. How is this possible? The answer is that the woman is the first person in Mark to hear and understand a parable of Jesus. The brief parable of the children and dogs at the table has disclosed to her the mystery of the kingdom of God. She is not distant and aloof, attempting to maintain her position and control. She does what Jesus commands of those who would receive the kingdom and experience the word of God: she enters the parable it allows herself to be claimed by it. That she answers Jesus from ‘within’ the parable, that is, in the terms by which Jesus addressed her, indicates that she is the first person in the Gospel to hear the word of Jesus to her.” (*The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar, 221-222)

Prayer from *Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson, “Almighty God, and most merciful Father, we humbly submit ourselves, and fall down before your Majesty, asking you from the bottom of our hearts, that this seed of your Word now sown among us, may take such deep root, that neither the burning heat of persecution cause it to wither, nor the thorny cares of this life choke it. But that, as seed sown in good ground, it may bring forth thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold, as your heavenly wisdom has appointed. Amen.” (Middelburg Liturgy, *Be Thou My Vision*, 42-43)

John Newton, “You say you feel overwhelmed with guilt and a sense of unworthiness? Well, indeed you cannot be too aware of the evils inside of yourself, but you may be, indeed you are, improperly controlled and affected by them. You say it is hard to understand how a holy God could accept such an awful person as yourself. You then express not only a low opinion of yourself, which is right, but also too low an opinion of the person, work, and promises of the Redeemer, which is wrong. You complain about sin, but when I look at your complaints, they are so full of self-righteousness, unbelief, pride, and impatience that they are little better than the worst evils you complain of.” (found in Tim Keller, *King’s Cross*, 90)

Heb. 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

2) Spit and speech (and song!)

Is. 35:4 Say to those who have an anxious heart,

“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God

will come with vengeance,

with the recompense of God.

He will come and save you.”

Is. 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

...

Is. 35:8 And a highway shall be there,

and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;

...the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return

and come to Zion with singing;

everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.