

**SLIDE 1**

# Is God Here to Meet my Expectations?

Mark 7:24-37  
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**Introduction**

I invite you to open the Bible and turn to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gospel, the Gospel of Mark. Chapter 7. Where we read this historical account beginning in verse 24.

**SLIDE 2****Mark 7:24–27 (NIV)**

**<sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. <sup>27</sup> “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.”**

Does this story raise some questions for you? Is this the response you expect from Jesus? I mean, isn't "demon possession" of a child a priority concern? Rather like yelling "fire"? When you yell "fire" what do you want? You want everyone to drop everything and do something! Right? But what is Jesus doing? Isn't he just lounging at dinner with his disciples. Can't He rise to address her concern?

What did Jesus do this? And why did He make sure that the account was saved and recorded for us to read 2000 years later in Holy Scripture? We conclude that understanding this story is important if it was important enough for God to make sure we have it. And does God want us to learn from Jesus' response?

How many of you enjoy a good mystery? Are you ready to get out your sleuthing cap?

To answer this let's look what is happening in this story. So we must go back to where it happened.

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Here is a picture much like what Jesus would have seen--the area around the Sea of Galilee.

To begin to understand Jesus response to the woman we have to go back where it first began. First, Jesus has been trying to get away to be alone with his disciples. His ministry was so full, and the crowds so persistent and pressing, that finally he has to leave the Sea of Galilee just to get away.

We read:

#### SLIDE 4

##### Mark 6:53–56 (NIV)

**53 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. 54 As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. 55 They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.**

Now we get a sense of what Jesus has been facing in the previous weeks. And we can understand why he needed to get away to the sea coast around Tyre. People are pressing him on all sides to meet their expectations. Are their expectations legitimate? Are they the kind of things we already know that Jesus wants to impact—the ways we know Jesus wants to help?

But it had gotten so intense, that He and the disciples did not even have a chance to eat!

#### SLIDE 5

##### Mark 6:30–31 (NIV)

**30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”**

See how returning to the scene starts to shed light on the event?

#### Application

Sometimes we ask, well why is it important for Christians to read the Bible regularly? Why do many of the folks we admire most who seem to understand God and his ways read the Bible through each year?

Here is one more reason—

**SLIDE 6**

**WHEN WE KNOW THE EVENTS OF THE BIBLE IN THEIR CONTEXT, IT HELPS US BETTER UNDERSTAND GOD AND HIS WAYS AND AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT GOD.**

And understanding God and his ways, helps us understand what is going on in our lives.

So going back to Galilee helps us understand what Jesus has been doing in the past weeks.

Let's look

**SLIDE 7 - EVENTS AROUND THE SEA OF GALILEE**

**HE HAS FEED THE MULTITUDES; HE HAS HEALED ALL WHO HAVE TOUCHED HIM, APPEARED TO THE DISCIPLES WALKING ON THE SEA, CALMED A STORM, HEALS A DEMONIC, AND PREACHED THE GREATEST SERMON IN HISTORY, THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT!**

So in Chapter 7, just to fulfill his desire to get to a quiet place and rest.

Does God need to rest? Yes! He did on the first 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week, right? We read in Genesis, on the seventh day He rested. And if God needs to rest, don't those made in his Image?

**SLIDE 8**

**SOMETIMES WE FORGET REST AND REFLECTION ARE ESSENTIAL FOR FULLY APPRECIATING LIFE!**

Now in Mark chapter 7 he has headed west, toward the Mediterranean Sea specifically around the port cities of Tyre and Sidon, in order to rest and be alone with His Disciples.

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**JESUS HEADS WEST TO THE SEA COAST...**

If Jesus needs this, what about us? Now as a legalism, but as in invitation? Yes we must work, and work diligently. The Bible is clear. But the Bible is just as clear, that you were designed in the image of God and you are designed for getting away, for rest and reflection. We need both to be balanced.

But there is a problem. Jesus' fame has beaten him to the beach. And as he finally sits down to dinner with his disciples, and He is interrupted.

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**MARK 7:24-26 (ESV)**

**24 AND FROM THERE HE AROSE AND WENT AWAY TO THE REGION OF TYRE AND SIDON. AND HE ENTERED A HOUSE AND DID NOT WANT ANYONE TO KNOW, YET HE COULD NOT BE HIDDEN. 25 BUT IMMEDIATELY A WOMAN WHOSE LITTLE DAUGHTER HAD AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT HEARD OF HIM AND CAME AND FELL DOWN AT HIS FEET. 26 NOW THE WOMAN WAS A GENTILE, A SYROPHOENICIAN BY BIRTH. AND SHE BEGGED HIM TO CAST THE DEMON OUT OF HER DAUGHTER.**

Ever sat down to dinner, after you have spent considerable time planning for it or preparing for it and the phone rings?

What do you say?

In my house, the children will tell you, I will say, "Your mother spent a lot of time making dinner, let it ring, and let the answering machine get it, we will return the call after we have cleaned up dinner."

And so the phone rings, and rings.

The didn't have phones, cell phones and text phones in Jesus day, but that doesn't mean the onslaught on getting away to rest wasn't just as intense for Jesus. Just as dinner is served, and who barges in? A gentile, a non Jew, specifically a syrophoenician woman with what she views as a critical need. Her daughter is possessed by an evil spirit.

Now in my view of the world that is like yelling Fire! A child who is tormented by the devil. What could be a higher priority, a higher expectation of God than to vanquish evil? Especially evil that is tormenting a child?

Now what is Jesus going to do? Get up from dinner and meet the need, right? Interrupt his rest and take care of it. But instead he does something rather unexpected. Specifically he says:

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**MARK 7:27 (NIV)**

**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 THEIR DOGS."**

What? Pardon me? This is my child, Lord. Certainly that is more important than you resting and eating your dinner! And what about what Jesus says: Is Jesus calling her a dog?

What is going on here with our Jesus? How much effort could this be? This is the guy that heals lepers just with the word of his command? Couldn't he just "answer the phone" and say "be gone devil" and then get on with his dinner? Why does he answer with this saying?

Here is what I think may be going on and what is behind God making sure that we wrestle with this story.

### **SLIDE 12**

#### **HERE IS THE TRUTH ABOUT US: WE ALL HAVE AN AGENDA FOR GOD.**

We all have expectation of God. We expect him to meet our expectations.

Have you ever heard, “there are no atheists in fox holes?”

What is the agenda of the soldier in the fox hole? Save me God from these artillery rounds. When the artillery rounds are falling all around, we have an agenda. We want God to save us, rescue us. Is that a legitimate need? Yes. Is that a legitimate request of God? Yes! Does Scripture say it is OK to ask God to rescue us? Yes.

### **SLIDE 13**

#### **THE QUESTION WE NEED TO LEARN TO ASK IS: WHAT IS GOD’S AGENDA!**

Every war is about rectifying injustice? Deep at the heart of it? Right? But what is God’s agenda in war?

That is the question that is the most important.

God may hear the prayer from the fox hole, but why later does the soldier die in battle? Does God not love them? Yes, he does. But God has an agenda, and it may require us giving our lives to accomplish it! Next week we will recognize those who died to buy the freedom we enjoy on Memorial Day.

You see for some it took charging out of the fox hole to neutralizing the machine gun nest so that the battle can be won, and it may take us dying to do it.

In fact Jesus says there is not greater love than to lay down your life for your neighbor.

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#### **WE ALL COME WITH EXPECTATIONS OF GOD. BUT WHAT IF GOD DOES NOT MEET OUR EXPECTATIONS?**

The answer is in this story. The woman responds with faith. She says:

### **SLIDE 15**

**MARK 7:28 (NIV)**

**28 “YES, LORD,” SHE REPLIED, “BUT EVEN THE DOGS UNDER THE TABLE EAT THE CHILDREN’S CRUMBS.”**

Essential she says, you are right, you are God and you have an agenda. You want to spend time alone with your disciples. I understand that. But I also know you are a loving God, and I have faith. And just like the dog that waits patiently under the table with the hope of pouncing on the crumbs, I am coming to you for just a crumb.

Do you have a dog like that? Most of us dog owners know exactly that hopeful look of our pouches at dinner. They know what is on the table is not for them. But they just hope to get a crumb or two.

So here is the situation. Jesus has told her, look, now is not the time, I have finally come to the seashore to get a break from the push and demands, and spend some time taking with and reflecting with my disciples. But she has given a wise answer that demonstrates she has the persistence of faith just like the persistence and hope that a dog has while waiting for a morsel to fall from the table.

So Jesus grants her request:

**SLIDE 16****MARK 7:29–30 (NIV)**

**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.**

So what do we learn?

Let’s admit it. We are human. We all have expectations of God. But we must acknowledge, God has a plan. God has an agenda. And it may be quite different from ours.

What we learn from this story is it is always right, always OK to ask our heavenly father with Faith.

It is always alright to ask with faith. It is always alright to live by faith. It is never a wrong time to pray and seek God’s face.

But we must never have the expectation that God will meet our expectation. That God will somehow divert from his will and adjust to our will.

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It is always alright to ask with faith, but we must never have the expectation that God will meet our expectation

We live by faith not by demand.

This is very hard to do. We view ourselves as little God's over our own life and our own destiny. Ask us, and most of us can give out three immediate suggestions to God that would make life on this earth better.

But it is this demanding spirit that can derail our faith.

How many times have you heard people leave the life of faith because God didn't do so and so, because God let so and so happen. How many times have you heard, "If God is a loving just God, then why did this tragedy occur? Or I can't believe in God because there is so much evil in the world.

Here is what you need to know.

**SLIDE 18**

**YOUR GROWTH IN GOD STOPS WHERE YOUR DEMANDS OF GOD BEGIN.**

I don't understand it but I know it is true.

Ask me and I will tell you that I am just sure that life would be a lot better, a whole lot better, with me at the wheel of my own red Corvette sting ray.

Or God why didn't you make me more beautiful, or smarter, or richer, or \_\_\_\_\_ fill in the blank.

Much of the gospels is Jesus trying to show us that He is God, we are not, and believe me life is better that way.

But the truth about us is everyone of us has a plan, and agenda for God.

The disciples did, the Pharisees did, the crowd did, Pilate did, the soldiers did, Herod did. Everyone has high expectations of God...but most of us forget, we are but a breath, a mist James says. Our time here is short.

What would happen if we reoriented ourselves to the truth found in the prayer we often pray.

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**THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.**

That is my expectation God. Your will be done.

In the weeks ahead, you are going to see a great battle portrayed in the book of Mark. A test of wills—between everyone plan for Jesus and his own plan.

And aren't you glad Jesus didn't listen to them. Because Jesus had a plan. It was to die on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. To bring an end to the sacrifice of goats, and sheep, and birds and calves to symbolically pay for sin. And instead, to actually pay for sin, but sheeding his own blood on the cross for you and me.

You see, God's plan actually is a better plan than ours.

I sometimes laugh at myself. David, if you really believed that heaven had streets of God, which I do because it is clearly described in Revelation, then why do you so desperately cling to life here on earth?

You see, Jesus has gone up to heaven, and he has prepared a place for us He has promised.

So we can now let go of living as if God needs to accommodate our expectations. And instead look at Biblical history and affirm.

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**You know what—life really does work better with God at the helm.**