

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Matthew said, “The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel” (Matt 15:31 NIV). I praise you today as the God who loves to restore all that has been broken by sin, and I thank you for bringing me out of the darkness into the glorious light of salvation. Praise the Lord!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees, a Gentile mother’s faith, and Jesus’ ministry in Decapolis. I was fascinated by the rebuke Jesus gave the Pharisees: “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9 NASB). The traditions of the elders had originally been put in place as guardrails to keep people on the road of righteousness. As time passed, the elders emphasized their traditions more than your commands, and soon they took precedence over your Word. At that point, rather than keeping people on the right path, the traditions invalidated Scripture and guided people away from your will. This teaches me that people have a tendency to honor their own rules above your Word. If I’m not careful, I can fall into this trap, and it will lead to what Isaiah said: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men” (Mark 7:6–7). I love the story of the Gentile mother because she stands in sharp contrast with the Jews who refused to believe in Jesus. Imagine, here was a “Canaanite woman,” someone the Jews considered unclean, yet she called Jesus, “Son of David,” showing that she believed him to be the Messiah (Matt 15:22)! I think Jesus recognized her faith from the start and used her to teach his disciples a lesson. He had just spent months reaching out to the Jews, teaching and preaching in their synagogues, healing their sick, and they had rejected him in unbelief. Here, in Gentile country, he ignored the woman’s cry for help, called her a “dog,” refused to give her the “children’s bread” (Mark 7:27), and instead of leaving in anger or unbelief, the woman persisted in faith. She agreed that the Jews must come first, but she added that the Gentiles should benefit from their blessings (Matt 15:27). What brilliant insight and compelling faith from an unclean, Gentile woman! Jesus must have been smiling as he said, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done as you desire.” Such is the faith that pleases you! (Heb 11:6).

Reflection

When Jesus wanted to feed the crowds for a second time, the disciples had no clue how this could be done (Mark 8:3–4). Am I guilty of the same kind of unbelief? Do I find myself panicked and distraught each time I face a situation where only your power can see me through?

Request

Father, purge the dross of unbelief from my heart and give me a quiet confidence in your ability to guide and protect. Help me to say, “Father, with you all things are possible. Here I am, use me.”

Thanksgiving

Thank you for reminding me that the condition of my heart is more important than the cleanliness of my hands (Matt 15:18). May I always be vigilant to guard myself from sin’s corrupting stain.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[A Wretched Man, Both Dumb and Deaf](#)” – Church Hymn Book.

Meditation Verse: Mark 7:37.