

SCENE III

THE STAGE: Read Mark 7:31-37

1. Where are they? Why might Jesus have taken the man aside?

THE SCRIPT:

3. What makes you wonder in this story?
4. Can you find any connection between these three stories in Mark?

THE REVIEWS:

1. What impresses you about Jesus' character in today's lesson?



IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE:

(Parallel Gospel Accounts)
Matthew 15:1-31

Next Week:
"Jesus Gets Real"
Scriptures:
Mark 8

[1] <https://human-initiative.org/the-meaning-of-qurban-and-its-relevance-amid-todays-social-challenges/?lang=en>

[2] Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels Sean Frayne pp.35 & 55

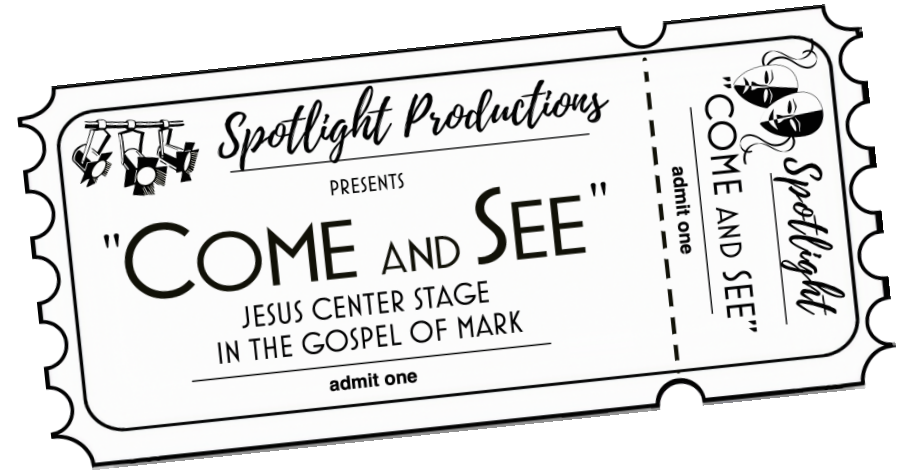
[3] Levine, Amy-Jill. The Gospel of Mark : A Beginner's Guide to the Good News. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2023. pp. 44-45

[4] Abingdon Press. The New Interpreter's Bible : General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994. Mark, pg. 610

[5] Davis, Jonathan, *Syrophoenician Woman*, Sermon on Mark 7:24-37, September 8, 2024

[6] Skinner, Matt, Working Preacher Commentary on Mark 7:24-37 <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-23-2/commentary-on-mark-724-37>

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LESSON #7

"Who You Calling Unclean?!"

Mark 7

Focus Scripture: Mark 7:14

"Listen to me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

Vocabulary Definitions:

Qurban (or Corban): a designated sacrifice or offering to the temple. Jesus refers to the corruption of taking your parents' retirement money and offering to the temple it in your name.

Defiled: Unclean, corrupted, impure, polluted, contaminated. Keep in mind that ALL gentiles were considered unclean, defiled. They, along with Samaritans, were referred to as "dogs." Which happens to be the term Netenyahu uses for Palestinians.

Be Opened: Διανοίχθητι To open thoroughly, to open completely, to be enlightened. "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him." "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:31, 45

Brief Historical and/or Cultural Context:

Last week, we saw Jesus kick Nazareth's dust off his sandals, rejected by his hometown. He then sends the twelve out with authority to teach, heal, and cast out demons. We saw evidence of God's Kingdom, the Seed sown and growing, in the feeding of the 5,000, and his foray back to the Decapolis, where he is overwhelmed by people from all over the region. His power is palpable. Whether preaching in the towns of Galilee or crossing the sea into Gentile territory, his movement seems relaxed and informal. Jesus proves himself to be the Lord of the sea, and his various crossings are important in his ministry. "The sea is no longer a threatening barrier, but a bridge between two hitherto opposing ways of life." [1]

Mark's 7th chapter opens with Pharisees and scribes questioning Jesus and his disciples, having been sent all the way from Jerusalem. The discussion focuses on the externals of religious worship rather than the essentials. Jesus' disciples do not wash their hands before eating, thereby violating Jewish law. These aren't germ-related practices but forms of ritual purity. Symbolic handwashing and other Sabbath observances were the means by which Jews preserved and affirmed their identity, resisted assimilation, and sanctified their identity within oppressive cultures. [2]

SCENE I

THE STAGE: Read Mark 7:1-23

1. YOU ARE THERE. Who are the three audiences in this text?

THE SCRIPT:

2. From where do the Pharisees and scribes come?
3. What is their issue with Jesus' disciples?

4. How might these questions be offensive to Jesus as a Rabbi?
5. What kind of response comes from Jesus (v. 6)
6. What kind of defilement is Jesus referring to?
7. Can you think of some modern traditions that sound lofty, but have little effect? Like washing the outside of a dirty cup and declaring it clean.
8. What correlation, if any, can you make between symbolic washing of hands (to be publicly Jewish and pure) and corruption of the heart?

SCENE II

THE STAGE: Read Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 15:21-25

Some Background: Keep in mind that Jesus has been teaching and healing throughout the Decapolis. He's not checking whether every person is a card-carrying Jew. His healing power extends to whomever touches his clothes! Now he has traveled to the Mediterranean coast. He is in Syrophenician territory.

Galilee produced and exported food for coastal towns like Tyre and other areas of Syro-Phoenicia. These rich and powerful cities depended on poor Jewish farming to supply their food, and in times of crisis or famine, it was the wealthy cities (like Tyre) that took all the food. So there are years and generations of resentment between Jews and Syrophenicians, and no wonder Jesus might say something like, "It's not fair to take the children's food and give it to the dogs." The wealthy were the dogs who took all the resources, and the Jewish people were tired of it. [4,5]

Recall the leftovers when Jesus fed 5000. The excess must therefore start spilling onto the floor — even now. The woman also recognizes the potency of this "food." She doesn't demand to be treated as one of the "children." *"Look, Mister, I'm not asking for a seat at the table. My daughter is suffering. All I need from you is a crumb or two. I know that will do the job. But I'm going to need it right now. Parents of really sick children don't wait around."* [6]

1. YOU ARE THERE. What is the emotional atmosphere?

THE SCRIPT:

2. What three details are in Matthew that are not in Mark's story?
3. How do you feel about Jesus' snarky response to the mother?
4. Explain why her response caused Jesus to change his mind?
5. Can you recall other instances where God "repented?"
6. What was the woman's act of faith?