Crumbs for the Dogs?

Key References: Mark 7:24-30; The Desire of Ages, chap. 43, pp. 399-403; The Bible Story (1994), vol. 8, pp. 19-21; Our Beliefs, nos. 11, 10, 14
Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed” (Matthew 15:22). The woman’s voice rang out time after time as she called to Jesus for help.

Jesus and His disciples needed to get away from the crowds so He could prepare them for their mission of spreading the gospel. He had taken them north of Israel, to the country of Phoenicia, where not many people knew about Him. There they could find peace and quiet, and Jesus would have time to teach His disciples. But even in a foreign country this desperate mother had tracked Him down. In fact, Jesus had purposely gone where she could find Him. He already knew that this mother needed His help. And He hoped to teach His disciples a lesson by the way He interacted with her. But at first He kept walking as if He didn’t hear her.

The disciples were frustrated because the woman kept following them. She was a Greek and a heathen—not a Jew who worshipped the true God. Why should Jesus waste His time helping her?

“Send her away,” they said to Jesus (verse 23).

But Jesus didn’t tell the woman to leave. Finally she came and knelt right in front of Him. “Lord, help me!” she pleaded (verse 25).

“Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs,” He said (Mark 7:27). Jesus was referring to the fact that the Jews considered themselves to be the only children of God. They looked down on the heathen and called them “dogs.” But the woman was not discouraged. She knew that Jesus was her only hope. No one else could drive the demons away from her daughter. She could not afford to lose this opportunity!
“Yes, Lord,” the woman responded humbly, “yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs” (verse 28). She reasoned that pet dogs still received remainders of the unused food fallen from the masters’ table. So even the heathen were entitled to a few “leftover” blessings from God.

Jesus was amazed by the woman’s strong faith. He had been testing her to see if she really believed in Him. Even though she’d had very few opportunities to learn about God, she still believed that Jesus could do what she asked. She believed that He cared about her problem. And she wouldn’t give up!

“Go your way,” Jesus told the woman. “The demon has gone out of your daughter” (verse 29). Jesus’ power over Satan is so great that He didn’t even need to see the girl to send the demons away.

The grateful mother rejoiced as she hurried home to find her daughter healed, freed forever from demons. The disciples were left with a lot to think about. Jesus tried many times to show His disciples that their attitude toward people from other countries was wrong. But it wasn’t until years later, after He went back to heaven, that they finally understood that Jesus loves people from every nation and wants to free all of them from Satan’s power. They
finally realized they needed to share the good news of the gospel with people in every part of the world.

It doesn’t matter where we live, or what color of skin we have, or who our parents are. All of us need to come to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to save us. We can trust that He will keep His promises as we decide to follow Him. Like the woman in this story, we need to have strong faith in Jesus and trust Him to answer our prayers according to His will.

The lesson the disciples learned that day is a lesson for you and me as well. All around us are people that need the loving touch of someone who cares. It doesn’t matter who they are—Black or White, Christian or non-Christian, rich or poor, fellow citizen or foreigner. Jesus can save anyone from the power of sin and Satan. Somebody needs our help today. Somebody needs to hear the story of Jesus. Will we share His love with them?
Instructions: Phone numbers replace some of the words in the following Bible verse. Using the phone pad as a guide, can you figure out the different people groups in the Bible verse that no longer exist in Christ? Ones are blanks.

“There is neither 539-1111 nor 4733-5111, there is neither 752-8311 nor 373-3111, there is neither 625-3111 nor 336-2531; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).