

Jesus Called Her a What?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 December 2023

Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 00] We've got an interesting account today in the book of Mark. We've been going through Mark since the beginning of the year. And what are we, about halfway through? What is there, 15 or 16 chapters in Mark?

And we're in seven. We're about halfway through. Looking at Jesus' miracles. Really, Mark is a lot about who Jesus is, his identity.

And we've mentioned in the past that Mark is a, and we'll see this this morning, is a book that it seems is written more to Gentiles.

It's written to, you see a lot of extra explanations that you don't see in, for example, in Matthew, which seems to be more written to the Jewish people.

But today we're going to be looking at Jesus' interaction that confuses a lot of people, his interaction with a Gentile woman.

[1 : 02] You don't see this actually very often in the ministry of Jesus, where he interacts with Gentiles during his three-year ministry. But we see here a woman that comes to him with a need, and she is desperate for him to help solve her problem.

We're going to actually look in this account in Mark chapter 7, but we're also going to be looking in Matthew, and I think it's Matthew chapter 14, or 15.

So we'll kind of be going back and forth, because there's a lot more explanation there in Matthew 15 that we'll be referencing to try to get all the details out of this story. We're just going verse by verse through this gospel of Mark, trying to understand more about the ministry of Jesus, and who he is, and what he's doing, and we're going to look at a lot of those things today.

So a few things we're going to look at. Jesus calls a woman a dog, and that is just wild. You know, sweet Jesus, right?

We see him so gentle and kind, and he ends up calling this woman a dog, and that's just shocking to so many people. We'll try to consider why that is.

[2 : 23] And then we're going to look at her faith. He mentions that she has great faith, and I want to look at the content of her faith. What was it about her faith that impressed him so much? And then, really, we're going to take a big picture, or take a step back and look at the big picture of why Jesus really didn't interact with Gentiles a lot, why his focus was almost exclusively on the Jews.

So let's start. We're going to read Mark 7. We'll start with verse 24. From there he arose, and he went to the region of Tyre and Sidon, and he entered a house and wanted no one to know it.

But he could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him, and she came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek and a Seraphonician by birth, and she kept asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

But Jesus said to her, Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. And she answered and said to him, Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.

Then he said to her, For this saying, go your way. The demon has gone out of your daughter. And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out and her daughter lying on the bed.

[3 : 47] Jesus has been traveling around Israel, mostly up north in the region of Galilee, which is really where he's from. Nazareth is in Galilee, and he's been crossing back and forth over the Sea of Galilee, going to different parts of that region.

The last thing that we read about here in the beginning of Mark chapter 7 is he had this dispute, this interaction, this quite tense interaction with the Pharisees, with the scribes and Pharisees, in which he rebuked them soundly.

And so we read here in verse 24, it says from there, from this spot where he was at before, and he had this interaction with the Pharisees, he arose and he went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. So why did he, we're going to ask the question, well, why did he go there, and what is this region of Tyre and Sidon? Tyre and Sidon are actually two coastal cities that are right near each other. They're not Jewish cities, they're actually just north of Israel. And today they would be part of Lebanon, the nation of Lebanon.

[5 : 01] And in the same way, it's not part of Israel, it's just north of Israel even today. Now it's probably not the case that Jesus went into the heart of, quote, Tyre and Sidon.

He probably just went up north to the very northern outskirts of Israel to the border areas of this Tyre and Sidon region because it seems like he was trying to get away from the crowds. He went to a house, he was trying to get some privacy, it sounds like, but did he get it? He didn't. His fame was, yeah, preceded him.

He was getting too popular, too famous. People knew who he was or what he was about and what he was doing. He was healing people. All over. And he just couldn't avoid the crowds. So it's possible that he was looking to just get away to a more quiet place. He went to the edge kind of Israel where there's probably not as many people, but it's right there on the border of a Gentile area.

[6 : 07] And at this time of Israel's history, Israel is not just Israel. There were Gentiles and Jews kind of all living together, but in Israel it was predominantly Jewish.

Where there were some Gentiles living among them. But as you went further north, and especially on the outskirts of Israel, there were a lot more Gentiles around. And so he's trying to get a little bit of a respite here in a house that he goes into, but he can't, it says that he could not be hidden. He couldn't keep himself hidden. It says in verse 25, For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him, just as many others had heard about him. And she came and she fell at his feet.

It says this, The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth. And she kept asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. So her daughter has an unclean spirit, a demon.

We don't know exactly what it was that was manifesting in her to think that she had a demon, but there was, I only see about two things in Scripture that seem to point to some kind of external manifestation of a demon.

[7 : 24] I guess three things. One, we read the story about the demoniac who was just nuts, right? He was crazy. He was crazy. We would maybe call that today mentally ill. But we have seen references to a deaf and dumb spirit, which Jesus drives out at one point.

And the other case that we see is spirits that convulse their victims with seizures, things like that. We see that several times, especially in the Gospels, which is really one of the few places where we actually see, there's actually a lot of indication of demonic activity in that Gospel period. So it's probably, I'm guessing, most likely, that there was some convulsion, some seizures happening. And that's what was manifesting with this young girl, this lady's daughter.

Let's talk a little bit about her origins. It says that she was, here it says that she was a Greek. And what does that mean? Does that mean she was from Greece? No, almost certainly not.

In fact, it says she was a Syrophenician by birth. But knowing the history, knowing kind of what was going on at the time, the Jews called anyone who was not a Jew, they called them Greek.

[8 : 42] You were either a Jew or a Greek. And why was that the case? Why would they call people Greeks? Well, the Greeks had taken over this whole region. Back hundreds of years ago, I can't remember off the top of my head what time period it was, but hundreds of years before this, Alexander the Great had come in and he had conquered this whole region and created the Greek empire.

And so the Greek language was the language of the day. That was the language of commerce. And usually people had their own local languages, Hebrew being, or Hebrew and other different languages being among them, but the language of commerce was Greek.

And so the Jews just called anybody who was not Jewish, anyone who, what we call today a Gentile, was Greek. Also, it says that she was Syrophenician by birth.

And what is a Syrophenician anyway? Well, we don't know much about that term, especially the combined term, but it seems to combine two names, Phoenician and, well, Syro.

What does that mean? Well, it's Syria. And so Phoenicia was a region just north of Israel, which included Tyre and Sidon. And then Syria was just north of that.

[10:00] And so I imagine that just this combined, the name of these two combined territories, which a lot of times when you have two regions next to each other, their culture kind of mixes.

And so she was from, she was Syrophenician by birth. One thing that actually I didn't think about until this morning or didn't consider, Ron's been taking us through the kings.

And today we just started into King Ahab. And King Ahab is most famous, I think, for having a very evil wife.

What's her name? Jezebel. Most people are familiar with Jezebel. Even people who don't study the Bible know that Jezebel was a pretty wretched woman. In fact, Jezebel is not a name that you hear people name their daughters very often these days because of her fame in the Bible.

Well, as we were reading through this morning, I didn't realize this, but Jezebel, he married her. She was a Gentile. Jezebel was a Gentile. And she was the daughter of a Sidonian king.

[11:13] So Tyre and Sidon were these two big cities on the coast in the region. So Jezebel's father was the king of Sidon back in the day, back during the kings.

And one of the things that she is known for is she was big on worshiping Baal, or Baal. And the worship of Baal was wicked, just evil.

It would do evil, evil things in the worship of Baal, things that will make your skin crawl, including sacrificing the innocent to Baal.

And so she was a big part of bringing Israel and seducing Israel into the worship of idols. And so you can imagine here, right, this is a woman of Sidon.

This place Tyre and Sidon, Seraphonician woman. There's a lot of bad blood here. These are not good people. These are wretched, evil people.

[12:18] Gentiles. Not people who worship the Lord. When we look at the same account in the book of Matthew, Matthew chapter 15, and like I said, you can maybe keep a thumb or a finger there, Matthew 15, 22 says this, And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.

My daughter is severely demon-possessed. Now, why would Matthew call her a woman of Canaan? Canaan. Now, we're familiar with that term going back to the patriarchal period when the Jews conquered the land of Canaan and all the people.

There were lots of different people groups, but as a whole, they were called the Canaanites. And so this is not a name that the Greeks would have used, calling her, they wouldn't have called her a Canaanite, but that was something that I think was something that Matthew used because Matthew, his audience is mostly Jewish, and that really showed, this is a woman who was of the people of Canaan.

And who were the Canaanites? The Canaanites were the wicked, evil people that God told Israel to drive out of the land, out of the land that I'm promising to you.

And so that just puts more of an emphasis on this lady's origins, where she comes from. I think it's interesting in this verse that we just read in Matthew, she calls Jesus what?

[13:54] Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. What does she mean, son of David? Is she just saying, oh, you're a Jew, you're a son of David? No.

What is that a reference to? She's referencing him as the Messiah, the one to come, the one from the lineage of the kingdom of David that was prophesied to come.

So evidently, she was familiar with the teachings of the Jews. And she had heard about him and knew that this guy at least was claiming to be the Messiah from the lineage of David.

And so she's coming to him, she's calling him the Messiah, calling him the Lord, bowing down before him and asking for help.

She's saying, my daughter is being tormented by spirits. Please, please help me. And he doesn't say anything to her.

[15:12] There's just silence. We don't read about that in Mark, but in Matthew 15, in the next verse here, verse 23, it says, but he answered her not a word. She's coming to him, she's calling him the son of David, calling him Lord, and he just ignores her.

What in the world is going on? Then it says in verse 23, again, Matthew 15, 23, and his disciples came and urged him, saying, send her away, for she cries out after us.

The disciples weren't inclined to help her either. She was just an annoyance. I mean, listen, you're worshipping false gods.

No wonder she has a demon. Get out of here. It's probably your own fault. You're worshipping demons. Hey, you brought this trouble on yourself.

And that's very likely what had happened. But they wanted to send her away because she persisted. And we see that.

[16:20] That's a major point here with this woman. She doesn't give up. She keeps persisting through lots of rejection, actually.

Finally, Jesus speaks up. And again in Matthew, the next verse, verse 24. So finally, he answers her and he says, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And this is interesting. You know, we tend to, as we read the Bible, we read it through the lens of our current age, of the current age in which we live.

But the situation, the context in which Jesus lived was very different from the context in which we live today. In fact, as Christians, we are, especially as evangelical Christians, and what does evangelical mean?

Well, evangelical means we are the kind of Christians that like to share our faith with other people. And we share our faith with not just Americans, not just the people around us, not just a certain type of people, not just a certain ethnicity or culture, but with everyone, with all cultures, with all ethnicities.

[17:43] But during the ministry of Jesus, he was focused exclusively on one group of people, and that was the Jews, his people. In fact, Jesus, he ministered, but then he also sent out his own disciples to minister.

He sent them out, and he told them where to go and what to do. And in Matthew 10, verse 5 and 6, he says this when he's sending them out.

These 12, Jesus sent out, and he commanded them, and he said, do not go into the way of the Gentiles. Don't go to the Gentiles. And do not enter a city of the Samaritans.

Don't even go to the Samaritans. The Samaritans were, had intermarried with the Gentiles, so they were not pure Jews. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

He said, listen, our ministry is just to Israel. Don't spend time with the Gentiles. Don't spend time with the Samaritans. Just go to the Jews. That is our mission. Stay focused on that mission.

[18:53] We're going to talk more about that in a minute. Does she give up? Okay, I guess I'm not Jewish.

I don't get anything. I'm just going to go home. She doesn't, does she? It says, going again to Matthew 15, verse 25, then she came and it says she worshipped him.

It just means she prostrated herself. She bowed down to him. And she said, Lord, help me. she's not going to be deterred.

And then Jesus responds again. And now we're going to go back to Mark, chapter 7, verse 27. And I mean, listen, she is persisting.

She's bowing down. She's worshipping him. She's asking again for help. And Jesus will probably at this point do whatever she asks. But this is how Jesus responded the second time.

[20:03] But Jesus said to her, let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. What did he say?

Did he just say what I think he said? Now, I don't know any culture in which calling someone a dog is okay.

You know, I was trying to think. The only thing I could think of is we have like hip-hop culture today. Yo, what's up, dog? But, other than that, calling somebody a dog is never a term of endearment.

And we can know from what happened before that Jesus is not saying something cute or nice or sweet or endearing. Now, this has messed, this has really confused a lot of people.

And so, a lot of people who teach the Bible, Bible commentators, some, not all, have tried to pull back the harshness. Say, well, this word for dog is actually, means more like a puppy.

[21:25] You know? And that is, you know, they could make a case for that. But that's not what Jesus is doing here. He's not saying, oh, you poor sweet little thing.

That's not what he's saying. He's saying, listen, I'm not going to do this for you because you don't deserve it. Because I'm not here to serve you I'm here to serve another group of people.

This is highly offensive. Now, it was actually common during this time for the Jewish people themselves to call people who are outside of Israel to call them dogs.

They would actually use truly a different name for dog. He does actually here use the name for more of a domesticated animal, like a pet, dog. Whereas, there's a different word which is typically used in a more derogatory sense towards more like dogs that are wild dogs out on the streets. But this was not, again, this was still a very offensive word. But it was common for the Jews to refer to the Gentiles as dogs. And I don't know that the Jews would directly in somebody's face call them a dog.

[22 : 40] But I can imagine that the Gentiles who lived among the Jews, they knew what they were called, what they were referred to, how they were thought about. And so when she hears this, it doesn't sound like she's really surprised.

But Jesus says, hey, let the children be filled first. For it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. What is he talking about, the children's bread?

Well, I think he's specifically talking about the benefits of his ministry, which one of the benefits is his healing ministry.

The prophets had actually prophesied that in the future that God would do something about people's infirmities. In fact, in Matthew 8, verse 16, it talks about the early part of Jesus' healing ministry.

it says this, Matthew 8, chapter 16, when evening had come, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, he himself took our infirmities, and he bore our sicknesses.

[24 : 02] That's from Isaiah 53. Also, when John the Baptist inquired whether Jesus was really the Messiah, he thought, I think he is.

In fact, he had said so earlier, but then he had some doubts, and he sent his disciples to go ask, is this guy Jesus really my cousin? Is he really the Messiah?

So Matthew chapter 11, verse 2, and when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and they said to him, are you the coming one, or do we look for another? And Jesus answered and said to them, go and tell John the things which you hear and see, the blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them, and blessed is he who is not offended because of me.

We'll actually talk about offense here in a second. Blessed is the one who is not offended because of me. But Jesus is saying, hey, listen, tell John what you see.

[25 : 06] the lame are walking, the blind are seeing, the poor have the gospel preached to them. These are things that the prophets indicated would happen with the coming of the Messiah.

And so Isaiah 35 verse 5 actually says that, then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped and the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

This is what was prophesied to happen. But notice he does say let the children be filled first. So he's really saying to this woman, listen, this is not time for you.

Right now, at this moment in time, first, my ministry is to the people of Israel, to the Jews. Which seems to indicate that there might be something coming for you at a later time and we're going to talk about that in a minute too.

But going back to Mark chapter 7 and verse 28, and she answered and she said to him, again, remember, this is like the third rejection in a row as she persists and tries to get him to help her and her daughter.

[26 : 23] He just finishes calling her a dog and she answered and said to him, yes, Lord. Notice how she doesn't deny me. She says, yes, okay, I'm a dog.

Yet, even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs. You know, she could have been offended.

I mean, she had every right to be, right? Just say, how dare you talk to me that way? I want to go find somebody else to help me.

Really, though, who else is going to be able to help her, right? I'm sure she had tried to find help elsewhere. Just talking a little bit about this idea of offenses.

You know, our culture today, the day in which we live, is so fragile, so sensitive to offenses. In fact, we have this phrase that goes around calling people snowflakes, right?

[27 : 34] People so sensitive to insults and little slights and injuries, so we have what we call today the snowflake culture. We have things like trigger warnings.

Careful, you know, if you hear something true that you don't like, be careful. You can go on a college campus and there will be like trigger warning signs. Hey, there's some free speech going on here.

Somebody might be talking about something that you don't like or you don't want to hear and so you might want to avoid having to hear words that you disagree with. We have things like safe spaces, a place where you can go and not have to deal with the reality of life.

And so a lot of people respond out of offense at the slightest things.

I think one, this is what we see in the culture and taking a cue from this Seraphonician woman. Let's raise our kids not to be so offended, to have thick skin, to be able to deal with difficulties and offenses.

[28 : 50] You know, there's no way to get through life without some kind of offenses. And it might come from your mortal enemies and sometimes it comes from your friends or even your husband or your wife.

Right? So we shouldn't be the kind of people that just easily become offended. I think about our culture and when it comes to Christianity and the Bible and the claims of Jesus.

And so many are offended at the Bible because of the things that happen in the Bible. There's lots of wars and violence and sometimes God destroys people, brings judgment and that offends people.

And then there's things in the Bible where the Bible actually talks about us. And the Bible says things like we are weak. The Bible says that our flesh is weak.

We're people that need a refuge in a fortress. We actually need God to be our refuge in our fortress. sinners. And the Bible calls us sinners and boy is that offensive.

[30 : 10] The Bible says that I'm a sinner? I'm a good person. I do good things all the time.

How dare you call me a sinner? I'm righteous. righteous. So because of those things they just ignore the Bible.

I'm not going to give heed to this book. I'm not going to seek after that God. Maybe I'll create a God in my own image. It looks like me.

A God that will tell me that I'm good enough and people like me.

Yet it reminds me of something that Jesus, this encounter with Jesus and his twelve disciples. It said that Jesus offended many people.

[31 : 11] He talked about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. We just had the Lord's Supper last week where we took those elements. The juice and the bread to remember the Lord and his death.

He told people, listen, if you want eternal life, if you want life, then you have to eat my blood and drink my flesh. That offended a lot of people.

Jews don't do that kind of thing. It was intentionally offensive. But what was the response of Peter?

He asked his twelve disciples, what about you guys?

Are you guys going to be offended too? Because you can go. And what did Peter say? Where are we going to go, Lord? Yeah, I could be offended, but am I going to find eternal life in anyone else? Maybe I can go worship Baal, and maybe I can get eternal life from him. No. Maybe today, right, what's the big thing?

[32 : 13] It's not worshiping idols, at least not in America. Well, there is some of that. People worship demons actually here in America, even to this day. But mostly it's, what's our idol? It's science, technology.

If we improve our technology enough, we can make our own utopian society. So I'm going to go towards science.

Science is going to be my savior. Maybe science can one day figure out how to give us eternal life.

And people are trying that even today. Is that where you can find eternal life?

And so the Bible says I'm weak? Okay. I'm weak. But he will make me strong.

The Bible says I'm sinful? Yeah, it's true. In fact, that one's not hard, is it? If you just look in the mirror. But there is one who can make me righteous.

[33 : 17] And the Bible says, or Jesus says I'm a dog? Fine. But even the dogs will eat the crumbs from the master's table.

It says in verse 29, then he said to her, for this saying, go your way, the demon has gone out of your daughter. And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out and her daughter lying on the bed.

Her persistence and her faith paid off. Even as a Gentile woman, part of a wicked, idol-worshipping people, Jesus met her need.

Notice how it says, he said to her, for this saying, he's saying because of how you responded, because of what you said, I'm going to meet your need.

Because of your faith. In fact, in the parallel account, again in Matthew chapter 15, it says this, then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith.

[34 : 28] Let it be to you as you desire. And then her daughter was healed that very hour. Her faith moved him to action. If she would have become offended and walked away, she would not have received her request.

It's interesting, in fact, Ron was talking about this morning, we'll talk about a couple of things, but there were two times when Jesus healed or did a miracle for Gentiles.

The other one was the centurion, remember? And he had a servant who was sick, and Jesus healed him. And there are only two times where Jesus is amazed at someone's faith.

It's these two times. Gentiles amazed at their faith. faith. And what is it about her faith that caused Jesus to respond to her?

You know, it's important when we see acts of faith in the Bible to ask the question, well, what was the faith all about? What's the substance of the faith? What's the content of the faith?

[35 : 49] You know, we have in our culture this kind of foggy idea of, well, it's good just to have faith, right? You just have to believe in something. It doesn't have to be, it doesn't matter what it is, just believe in anything, and that's great.

And is that great? No. Believing in some things is just stupidity. foolish. The content, the substance of the faith is what really matters.

This life is not like a Disney movie, right, where we just have to believe. It matters what we believe. Believe what? And so what was this woman believing?

What was her faith in? And I think it's clear to me anyway, she believed that God was good, even to little dogs.

God's love and care extended even to those who don't really deserve it. She believed that. She was willing to persist in faith because of her belief in that.

[36 : 56] And Jesus, instead of rejecting her, instead of being angry, how dare you believe that I would do something like this for you? He was pleased. It reminds me of Hebrews, right?

Hebrews chapter 13. Those who believe in God must believe that he is, and what? That he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

That's what God wants. He wants all of us to know, to believe, that he will reward anyone who will come to him, and diligently seek after him. So here's the big question.

Why this big focus on the Jews? You know, like I said before, we take the good news, the gospel of Jesus. We preach Jesus as Christians today all over the world. Going to Africa, like Bo's doing this summer.

We support missionaries in this church, in Brazil, trying to think of all the places. Another place in Africa, I can't remember, is it Malawi, where Brooke's at? All over the world.

[37 : 59] world. And so, we know, and it's just part of Christian culture, that God accepts people no matter where they come from, no matter what culture.

And so it's easy to import that paradigm into our readings of the gospels. But we need to understand that the gospels are just a continuation of the Old Testament. It's just a continuation of God's program with Israel, with the Jews.

And so Jesus came, not as the savior of the world per se, he came as the Messiah to the Jews. The whole concept of him being the savior of the world would kind of really come later.

His birth was prophesied by Jewish prophets, and he came, as he said, to establish, like the prophets spoke of, a kingdom for Israel.

Jesus came to restore Israel, to restore them to their land, to their kingdom. But first, the first thing he had to do was call them to come back to God. And so his message, and this is all throughout the

gospels, and we see it from the very beginning, his message is repent, turn to God, for the kingdom of God is at hand.

[39 : 22] The kingdom is right at hand, and I need Israel, I need you to turn to God, I need you to repent. And that was his mission, all those three years, to go to Israel, and say, turn to God.

But when we look in the Old Testament at the prophecies, it was almost exclusively about Israel, but there are some references to the Gentiles.

In Isaiah chapter 42, verse 1, it says this, Behold my servant whom I uphold, my elect one, in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him, and he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

Interesting. A few verses later, verse 6, Isaiah 42, verse 6, it says, I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand.

I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, and as a light to the Gentiles. Now, Bible scholars have a, you know, differ on, well, who is this talking about?

[40 : 34] Who will be a light to the Gentiles? Well, there's definitely a reference to the Messiah, but also the people of Israel. Another verse, Isaiah 49, verse 5, says this, And now the Lord says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, so that Israel is gathered to him.

This is the gathering of Israel to God. For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. Indeed, he says, it is too small a thing.

Ah, this is, it's a trivial thing, that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob. Again, the tribes of Jacob, that is Israel, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel.

I will also give you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth. the Jewish people, along with the Messiah, were to be a light in the world when their kingdom was restored, a light to the world, a light to the Gentile people.

In this time where we celebrate Jesus' birth, there's this account from when Jesus was born and he was taken to the temple and there was a man named Simeon there.

[42 : 04] This is from Luke 2, verse 25. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. He knew what the prophets had told.

He was waiting for when Israel would be restored through the coming of the Messiah. And the Holy Spirit was upon him, and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ or the Lord's Messiah.

So he came by the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.

This is what the prophets had said, that Messiah would come, Israel would be restored, and this nation, this new nation, which would establish justice in the earth, would be a light, and the Gentiles would come to faith through them, because they were the light, they were the evangelists.

[43 : 28] another verse, Isaiah 60, verse 1, arise and shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people, but the Lord will arise over you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. The Gentiles will come to the Lord because of you, Israel, because of your faithfulness to serve me, the brightness of this kingdom.

And that was God's plan through prophecy, to restore Israel, to establish their kingdom, to set up a throne in Israel, that the light of the Messiah and the light of the Jews would then bring all the rest of the earth to God, for those who were willing, for those who wanted to come to the light.

But then something happened. And this confuses so many people. Well, I'm not seeing this today. It doesn't seem to make sense with how things are today and what's going on with the Jews and Israel. I mean, this hasn't happened yet. Where did the Gentiles come into the picture?

[44 : 51] Isn't Israel's kingdom supposed to be established first? And here's what happened. In Acts chapter 13, we read about Paul, the apostle, and he's been sent out by God to preach, to preach about Jesus.

We know he went out among the Gentiles, but he first went to the Jews. He would always go to the Jews first. It says this in Acts chapter 13, verse 46, then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and they said, it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first.

Now, he's saying this because they just rejected his message, the Jews. I can't remember where he's at in Acts 13, but the Jews in this location, they're rejecting his message, this message about Jesus as the Messiah.

He says, but since you rejected and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. And then he says this, for so the Lord has commanded us, I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.

He says, listen, you were supposed to be the light to the Gentiles. You rejected him. So there are a few of us, there are a few of us, we're going to take this light to the Gentiles.

[46 : 20] It wasn't the way that it was supposed to be. In fact, if you read in Romans chapter 9, 10, and 11, we find out more about exactly what happened here. I'm just going to read one verse from Romans 11.

The whole Romans 9 through 11 is all about, well, what about the Jewish people? They've, in general, rejected God. I mean, there's a few that have trusted in Christ, but for the most part, Israel's rejected their Messiah.

But there was all these prophecies about restoring their kingdom, and what's going to happen now? So Paul, in Romans 9 through 11, is explaining that. And he says in chapter 11, verse 11, he says, I say then, have they stumbled?

He's talking about Israel, that they should fall? Certainly not. This isn't the end. But then he says this, this is what happened, he says, but through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

because of their fall, through their fall, because they rejected their Messiah, God pivoted, and he said, I'm going to go to the Gentiles.

[47 : 30] I'm going to be a light to the Gentiles without the Jews, and I'm doing it to provoke them to jealousy. These were not my people, these Gentiles, but I'm going to make them my people.

I'm going to make them my people. And so salvation has come to us as Gentiles. Because the Jews, they didn't come along.

In Colossians chapter 3 verse 9, Paul is teaching about how to live the Christian life and our new life in Christ, and he says this, do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds, Colossians 3 verse 9, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him.

And then he describes the new man that we are, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, which just means savages, slave nor free, but Christ is all and all.

Therefore, as the elect of God, and he's talking about you and me, those who have trusted in Christ, the elect of God, that was a word that was used for one group of people, the Jews.

[48 : 52] They were the chosen people of God. So as we put ourselves in this story that we just looked at today, who are we?

We're the dogs. dogs. I mean, unless there's any Jews in here. We are the dogs. We're the barbarians.

We're the savages. We're the brutes. We are the foreigners when it comes to God's people. We are the strangers to his covenants and promises.

As it says in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 12, it says, we were without hope and without God in the world. But then, then God did something.

You know, each of us individually, we always think that we're special, right? Doesn't everybody think they're special? And a good mommy, right, will tell our kids, oh, you're special. But are we special?

[49 : 58] Not really. The psalmist says, who am I, oh Lord, that you would have any favor on me? That's the kind of attitude we ought to have, right? Especially as Americans, right, we think we're special.

But we're not special except for one thing. God made us special. He decided to put his favor and his love and his affection on us.

And when he laid down his life, it wasn't just for the Jews, but it was for the whole world, even for the dogs, that we might have life as well, that we might become the chosen ones.

And you become a chosen one by receiving the chosen one, Jesus Christ. That we might become adopted sons, that we might be what the Bible calls accepted in the beloved.

We are accepted now. That we might be called the righteousness of God. That we might be set apart as holy, God's special people.

[51 : 07] That was something just for the Jews. And now for anyone who trusts in Christ, we can be God's people. Isn't that amazing? Isn't God good to us?

It didn't have to be. It didn't have to be good to dogs. God is willing, no matter who you are, where you come from, even what your background has been, even with the idol worship that we saw there during his time, he was willing to accept you.

Tell you what, can we sing a song as we finish up here? I had this in mind. It's a simple one. I think most of us know it. Oh, how he loves you and me. Who knows that song?

Oh, how he loves you and me. All right. I did this before and I got the wrong key, so everybody's going to, all right, is he going to do the right, we don't have the music queued up.

Oh, how he loves you and me. Oh, how he loves you and me. He gave his life.

[52 : 23] What more could he give? Oh, how he loves you. Oh, how he loves me.

Oh, how he loves you and me. Amen. Probably a little bit high, but I think that did okay.

all right, let's pray. Father, thank you for loving us. I pray that you would work in our hearts, that our faith in your love for us would grow stronger and stronger every day, and that we would be faithful servants of yours, evangelists, good evangelicals, to take your message of the cross to people all over in the circles of influence in which we live, and even further, to let people know that you will accept them.

They'll just not be offended, but humble themselves before you and trust in what you did for them on the cross, and we thank you for that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen.