

# He Speaks In Riddles

## Week One: The Canaanite Woman

### Ian Graham

C.S. Lewis: Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he- quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"... "Safe?" said Mr Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you

C.S. Lewis: The harshness of God is kinder than the softness of men and his compulsion is our liberation.

#### **Matthew 15vv21-28**

21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." 23 But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26 He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that moment.

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#### **Cultural Context**

**-Canaanite Woman:** Only time the word Canaanite appears in the New Testament. There is a parallel in Mark 7 that labels her a Syro-Phoenician woman. One of the few interpersonal interactions that Jesus has with a gentile during his earthly life. Context clues in Mark 7 would suggest she is a woman of means (word translated bed suggests measure of wealth). Tyre was a wealthy coastal city that had no arable land, but was famous for being a center of shipping and trading, likely making Galilee its bread basket. This would have suggested some tensions between center of commerce and their purchasing power with peasantry of Galilee.

**-Have mercy on me Lord, Son of David:** parallel of blind men seeking healing in Matthew 9. They do not call him, Lord. One of the most "orthodox" pronouncements of Jesus' identity in the gospels.

Elizabeth Scüssler Forienza:

That such a theological argument is placed in the mouth of a woman gives us a clue to the historical leadership of women in opening up the Jesus movement to "Gentile sinners (Gal. 2:15). The story of the Syro-Phoenician [Canaanite] makes women's

contribution to one of the most crucial transitions in early Christian beginnings historically visible.

Karl Barth: We Christians are guests in the house of Israel.

## Two Perspectives On This Passage:

### 1. Invitation To Persistence in Faith

**-Keep Praying/Petitioning**

**-Recognizing Dark Night Of The Senses**

**John Of The Cross from R. Thomas Ashbrook's "Mansions Of The Heart"**

- no consolation or satisfaction from spiritual practices or even from other people
- The darkness has no apparent cause, we are not depressed, and there is no hidden sin that is causing it
- We feel as if we are not serving God well
- We experience a powerlessness to meditate on God's word, our imaginations in scripture feel stifled, prayer may feel like a waste of time
- In this spiritual dryness, a "dark light" shines that brings us greater awareness of our sinfulness, and how deeply pre-occupied with self all of our actions seem
- This can last a while and is hard

### 2. Invitation To Wrestle

God orchestrates and welcomes his own "magnificent defeat"

Genesis 32

24 Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." 27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, yet my life is preserved."

Martin Luther- He let himself be made captive, and much comply. Be sure of this: that's what he most deeply desires...