

# Help of the Helpless

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Date: 06 July 2025

Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[ 0 : 00 ] We can turn back to our reading in Mark's Gospel, chapter 7. We can read again at verse 26. Verse 25.

When you come to the Gospels in particular as you find Jesus' ministry ongoing, how many times do you see him challenged and facing opposition?

You may expect it to be the other way around that Jesus has come and he's declared why he's come. He's declared throughout the Gospels that he's come to seek and to save the lost, that he's come to give his life as a ransom for many.

You see the mix.

You see that there are those, there are many who look at him and despise him and reject him and put him away. But that there are those who will see him for who he is. And here in the beginning of chapter 7, you see the opposition of the Pharisees once more.

[ 2 : 06 ] In verse 1. Now when the Pharisees gathered to him with some of the scribes, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is unwashed.

So they immediately found fault. They immediately found problems with him. But Jesus knows their heart. And that's what he says to them there in verse 6 and verse 7.

Well, as Isaiah, the prophet written, This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. So he's getting at them. He's challenging them even as they are challenging him.

But do you ever see Jesus think, what's the point? Why do I bother? Is it really worth going on with this? Is it worth going from place to place and proclaiming this good news that I have?

Nobody's listening. You never see him with that kind of attitude. Everywhere he goes, every place you see him, there are always those who will come to him and who will listen.

[ 3 : 13 ] And there's always a point to his ministry. There's always a purpose in his ministry. Even those who are rejecting him, they are being challenged.

But behind it all, you see the many who come. And the many who come from all different places and backgrounds and experiences in life. And yet who come to see who Jesus is.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. There's that statement in Luke's Gospel, chapter 19. He came to those who would realize their great need.

He came to people, no matter who they were, no matter where they were, and no matter when. So we're not just looking at Jesus saving people in the Gospel days.

We are here this evening remembering that this is a Jesus who still saves. Who still calls his people to himself. And so what you see as you go through this chapter.

[ 4 : 21 ] It's even in the face of the opposition from the Pharisees and the scribes. Opposition that would go on and on. What you see is the work goes on as well.

His purpose goes on. His ministry goes on. And it goes on in amazing ways. Spectacular ways.

Ways that leave people amazed and astonished beyond measure, as it says in verse 37 at the end of this section.

His ministry leaves people marveling. Just like the psalm that we sang at the start. When there's a psalmist with all these questions. Where are you, Lord? Have you left us?

Have you abandoned us? But then the psalmist comes and says, then to me came these thoughts.

And on this I will rely. And how he goes on to say, you are the God of miracles.

Whose power the nations view. That he is a God who is working. And so in these verses that we've read together this evening. You see the challenge.

[ 5 : 25 ] But then when you come to verse 24 down to the end of the chapter. You have these two different accounts of Jesus meeting with people and in their different needs.

And they're remarkable encounters. They're amazing encounters. First with the Syrophenician woman. And then with the man who was deaf and mute.

They're both remarkable encounters. And quite beautiful in the way that Jesus comes into the midst of this situation. Having just been challenged by the scribes and Pharisees.

And we've really got an illustration of what John tells us in his first chapter. In John chapter 1 verse 11 and 12. John gave these words.

It says about Jesus. He came to his own. But his own did not receive him. That's the very thing that we see here. With these scribes and with these Pharisees.

[ 6 : 25 ] He came to his own. But his own did not receive him. But then John goes on to say. Yet to all who received him. To those who believed in his name.

He gave the right to become the children of God. And that's to all who would come. To those who believed in his name.

He gave the right to become children of God. And that's the remarkable thing that we see in this passage. The remarkable way that this woman and this man who was deaf.

The way they are able to become the children of God. Despite everything that's going on in their lives. Despite everything about them. As we will see in a moment.

They're really people who we wouldn't expect to come to Jesus in this way. People who wouldn't expect to be classed children of God. And yet he has given them the right.

[ 7 : 25 ] By coming. By faith. The Jews reject him so often as we see in these gospels. But those who are not his own in that sense.

The Gentiles. The two kinds of people you had in these days. Were the Jews as one group of people. And the rest were classed as Gentiles. And the Jews were of course special to the Lord. And the Gentiles were very often looked down upon. And yet he gave the right for them to become the children of God. To come by faith.

And what we find here is that there is help for the hopeless. For those that seem to be a hopeless case. That things seem beyond the reach of God.

That there is help available. There's a hymn, I'm sure many of you know it, Abide With Me. It's a very commonly sung hymn. It was written by Henry Francis Light.

[ 8 : 28 ] And he wrote this hymn. He was a Scotsman. Who ministered in Ireland and in England. But he suffered with tuberculosis. And he died in his early 50s.

And it was just a matter of weeks before he died. That he penned this hymn, Abide With Me. His longing was for the Lord to be with him.

And it's actually a hymn that's sung every year at Wembley. And thousands are gathered there for the FA Cup final every year. And this hymn has been sung just before the FA Cup final since 1927. Every year it gets sung. And you hear this great chorus of people singing. And you wonder, do they realize, do they know what they are singing? And the words are there so wonderfully.

And it's one line that speaks of, When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me. Powerful words when you think of the situation the hymn writer was in as he wrote them.

[ 9 : 35 ] On his deathbed, just weeks before he passed away. But help of the helpless, the one who would abide with him. And this passage shows us that Jesus is that help of the helpless.

That he is the one who will abide with his own, that comes to his own. And so this evening as we gather, we can come without our own questions.

We can come seeking to understand things ourselves in the midst of maybe feeling that sense of hopelessness. We can maybe feel it in our own helplessness in different ways.

We can have times when we feel helpless in the midst of family trials, times of illness. There can be many things going on in our lives. We can feel helpless in the midst of financial difficulties.

We can feel helpless in the midst of decisions that we're trying to make going forward. And above all, we can feel helpless when it comes to our own mortality and our own eternity.

[ 10 : 42 ] Where can we go for help in that? Where can we turn? Well, it's to the help of the helpless. But I think it's important too that not just that maybe some of us have these questions, but that even if we don't have these questions, that we must realize that there are many who do.

That there are many people out there who have all of these kinds of questions. When they are feeling helpless, when they are feeling unworthy, when they are feeling there's nowhere to turn, that we realize that there are people like that.

And that we have one that we can direct them to. The one who is this help for the helpless. We can come to Jesus. And we can point others to Jesus.

We find here this help for the helpless. We're going to focus mainly on the woman who had this daughter who was demon-possessed.

But we'll see too how it ties into with a man who was deaf. The help for the helpless. And the first thing we see here is how Jesus' ministry is ongoing.

[11:58] It's just after he's had these challenges with the scribes and the Pharisees that we come to verse 24. And from there, he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

So he went away. His ministry spreads out further. First to Tyre and then to Sidon. And when you look at these kinds of places that he was going, there weren't easy places to go.

There were very difficult places to go. There were places that were full of false gods. Different kinds of gods. There were very much a pagan society.

But even there we find that Jesus was being spoken of. That word of him was spreading. That people were hearing about him. And you see it there in verse 24 as it goes on to say.

He entered a house and did not want anyone to know. Yet he could not be hidden. The news of him was out there. People were hearing.

[13:07] People were curious. People were wondering who this man was. And he was seen as perhaps one who could help. And that is true of this woman that we meet here in this passage.

She had heard of him. It says in verse 25 that immediately a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell at his feet.

News was spreading. And she came and fell at his feet. Her daughter was ill. Possessed by a demon.

She was desperate for help. Here is someone who is helpless. But when you look at her. And when you look at this situation.

You find that there are a number of different challenges to be overcome. Even just to come to this point of being with Jesus. There were challenges that had to be overcome.

[14:14] And yet you see the wonder of the grace of God working in this. And the first challenge she had to overcome was being seen as an outsider.

Being seen as an outsider. It says then in verse 26. Now this woman was a Gentile. A Syrophenician by birth.

So immediately there was this barrier that was up. The last person you read about in this gospel of coming to the feet of Jesus.

Begging for help was Jairus. Whose daughter was unwell. But Jairus was a Jewish leader. You could almost say that Jairus had a right to come.

That he knew where to go. And that the way was open for him to come. It wouldn't have been a surprise for anybody to see Jairus come and plead with Jesus. But it's so different for this woman.

[15:20] A Gentile. A Syrophenician by birth. She was a woman for a start. To come begging of Jesus.

It would have been frowned upon by so many. You see it throughout the gospel so often. As a woman comes to Jesus. You think of the woman at the well in the gospel of John.

The woman was there at the well. And the disciples came back. And saw a woman with Jesus. And they were questioning in their head. Why is she here? And you see it so often.

That these women coming to Jesus. It was difficult. Because there was barriers up. There was challenges up. Straight away. And this was a Greek. A complete outsider.

Someone who would have been seen with no right to come to Jesus. And yet here she comes. You see Jesus is not looking on the human status here of where she's from or who she is in that sense.

[16:25] But she's looking on the human need. Although it's not at first appear just as obvious as you read on. There is a concern for this woman that works itself out as we go through.

But the first thing we see is the sense of an outsider coming to Jesus. But again it's a reminder that he has given a right to all who come by faith to be called the children of God.

And it is so often the case that we can feel a little of an outsider ourselves when we come to church. How can we possibly come to Jesus?

How can I come without a church background or a church family? How can I come as someone who's never darkened the door of a church? Well the gospels remind us that it's for all.

For all to come. Or people will come and say but I have no idea how to approach the Lord in prayer. I have no idea what words to use. Or I don't know what I should wear.

[ 17 : 35 ] There can be so many questions and doubts. And we come work out our own conclusions and say I can't go. Well this woman although she could have had all these doubts and fears.

She never comes to that conclusion that I cannot go. Instead she comes begging. And there are so many people around us who will automatically come to their own conclusion.

That I cannot go to church. I will not be received. I will not be welcomed. It's a bit like a story I read. And it sounds a silly story in many ways. But it's a way our minds can work. It's about a man who was out in his car one night. And he got a puncture.

And he had a spare wheel. But he didn't have a wheel spanner. So he couldn't get the nuts opened on the wheel. And he saw a farmhouse way up the road.

[ 18 : 36 ] And so he thought well there's bound to be help there. And he started walking towards it. But automatically his mind started working in a different way. He started questioning.

Maybe they won't have the right spanner. And then he started thinking well it's late at night. They're probably going to be angry with me for knocking at the door so late at night.

And disturbing me. It's disturbing them. And he started getting angry in his own mind. And so that when he came to the house. And knocked on the door. And the owner came to the door.

He automatically had a reply. He says you can keep the wheel spanner. I wouldn't take it even if you offered it to me. And the man was stunned.

He thought I've never met this man before. But it's just the way the mind can work. It automatically comes to conclusions about things. That work things out in their own mind.

[ 19 : 30 ] And how many people around us have already worked out in their own minds. What to expect if they come to church. Or to come to Jesus. And it can often maybe leave them feeling that sense of anger.

Because they've come to their own conclusions. That God is not fair. God is not just. Why would he allow so many things to happen in this world that are so unfair?

And immediately they're coming with a sense of anger towards God. Because that's what's worked in their own head. But the gospel helps us to break down these barriers.

And to show that the door is open for all. That Jesus welcomes all on the same level. To all who come by faith he has given the right to be called the children of God.

And so this woman overcomes that barrier of being an outsider. And we have to help people overcome that barrier too.

[ 20 : 37 ] Because there are so many who feel outside of this church. Outside of the gospel reach. Outside of faith in Christ. That it's almost impossible to come over these barriers.

But the gospel is there to show that Jesus is there for them. The second thing she has to overcome is the reality of her hopeless situation.

In the middle of verse 6 it says, She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. It was a hopeless situation.

Her daughter was possessed by a demon. And it's very likely that this was not the first person that she had come to for help. That others had not been able to help her.

Like the woman who had the issue of blood. That we read of in the gospels as well. How she came to Jesus having spent everything that she had trying to find a cure.

[ 21 : 38 ] She had been trying for years, 12 years to find a cure. And there was none until she came to Jesus. It was likely this woman would have been doing the same.

Begging with others for help for her daughter. And yet nothing was working. But she doesn't give up. She had heard about Jesus.

She had heard about him and she came and fell at his feet as it says in verse 25. In what was seemingly a hopeless situation, she comes begging.

And the same is true with the man who was deaf. It says in verse 32, They brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment.

And they begged him to lay his hand on him. This idea of begging is there in both situations. Pleading with the Lord.

[ 22 : 38 ] Desperate before the Lord. And what a reminder to us of our need to come. And to encourage others to come.

And to beg and to plead at the throne of grace for ourselves and for others. To see that Jesus is the one who is able to help in a hopeless situation.

And there are so many of them. And yet Jesus is the one who is able to help. There was someone who once said, Between the great things that we cannot do and the small things we will not do, the danger is that we shall do nothing.

And that's so often where we find ourselves. Between the great things we cannot do and the little things we will not do, we end up doing nothing.

And that's the way we can be with the Lord. When our situation feels hopeless. It's like the little things are so unimportant there's no point. And the big things are impossible so there's no point.

[ 23 : 46 ] And we do nothing. And the devil would like nothing better than for us to be inactive in that sense. But when you look at this woman, and when you look at the friends who brought the man who was deaf and with a speech and pigment, they came begging.

They came pleading. They didn't see their situation, hopeless as it was, as impossible for him. It's not impossible for Jesus.

And that's what we have to remember. What by all accounts was impossible for the natural person, we see Jesus here who's able to help.

That's something for us to remember, for ourselves and for others too. That however impossible a situation seems, we are to bring it to the Lord and he is able.

Again, you see it in the Gospel of Luke chapter 18, where the question is asked, who then can be saved? And the answer Jesus gives is, what is impossible with men is possible with God.

[ 24 : 57 ] And something for us to remember. To remember for ourselves or to remember for others around us.

Whether you feel like the Gospel has passed you by. Whether you feel the burden of your sin is too much. Whether you feel that your heart is so hard and cold, the Lord would never receive you.

It's to remember that what is impossible with us is possible with God. And that in a moment, in a blink, the Lord can change us.

And that's what you see with both these situations. In a moment, in an instant, the Lord brings change. She had to overcome the hopeless situation.

The same as the deaf man. But they came to Jesus. The third thing we see with this woman is she had to overcome rejection.

[ 26 : 04 ] And like I said earlier, when Jesus looks at the human heart, when he looks at the human situation, it's interesting the way he handles this situation. And in Matthew's Gospel, it's recorded a little bit more about this encounter.

In Matthew 15, verse 21 to verse 28, it's the same encounter, but it goes into a little more detail. And in Matthew's Gospel, it says that the woman came to Jesus, fell at his feet, and she was in tears.

She's crying. She's begging for help for her daughter. And in Matthew's Gospel, the first thing it tells us of Jesus' response is in verse 23, and it says that Jesus said to her not a word.

He didn't open his mouth. He said nothing. It's almost like he ignored her. And then when you see him finally speak, as we see here in verse 28, sorry, verse 27, what does he say to her?

He says, It's almost like he's belittling her in front of everybody.

[ 27 : 34 ] that he has come first for his own, and that the others can be left until last. To take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

He's almost calling her, in this case, that she's that dog. But he doesn't send her away. And in many ways, as you look at this, although it sounds so cruel, there's almost a challenge in these words.

How much do you want me? How much do you need me? And when you look at the answer that she gives, it's so beautiful.

She says in verse 28, Yes, Lord. It's almost like she's agreeing with him. I agree with you.

But then she goes on to say, Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. She's saying, Even a crumb from the master's table can help me.

[ 28 : 44 ] That is how much she recognizes her need. That is how much she recognizes that Jesus is able to help.

Do we have that view of Jesus? Even a crumb from the master's table can help me in my situation. Jesus is testing her here. But when you look at the longing that she has, you see that being tested, she still comes.

And Jesus then says to her, For this statement, you may go your way. The demon has left your daughter. He's looking for this statement of faith.

Because all who come by faith have been given the right to be called the children of God. And here is a child of God coming, recognizing that even just a crumb from the master's table is able to help.

[ 29 : 47 ] She doesn't throw her arms up and say, How dare you call me a dog? She doesn't throw a fit and just go out in a rage. She shows him how much she needs him.

She shows him how much she is depending on him. And today, people so easily take offense that if you were to say to someone, As you come here, you come as a sinner.

People would say, How dare you call me a sinner? How dare you say that to me? I'm a good person. You know nothing about me. We don't need to know anything about anybody because the Bible tells us that we are all sinners.

Every one of us. We are all like that. And it's not to take offense and to say, How dare you? But to say, Well, where can we go for help?

Where can we find even a crumb from the master's table that is able to help? Well, it's to come to Christ. It's to come to Jesus. To come acknowledging our dependence upon him and to see the abundance of the grace of God that is sufficient for all things.

[ 31 : 02 ] The crumb from the master's table was enough for her because she came by faith. And maybe we come at times with that sense of rejection.

Maybe we feel the Lord isn't interested or ignoring us and our needs. Just like the psalmist, will you forget for all time? But do we have faith to keep begging?

To keep pleading with the Lord? This woman begged him. This deaf man begged him for help. And he answered.

And so we too must plead with him. We must see that we depend on him. That he is able to help. That he is able to see our need. That he knows our need. Hebrews 4 verse 15 says, Jesus knows our weakness.

[ 32 : 09 ] Jesus knows our helplessness, our hopelessness in so many situations that we find ourselves in. But the question is, do we believe that he is there?

Do we believe that he is able to help? This woman came begging. And it says in verse 30, she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

The Lord had helped. This man who came with his friends, who was deaf and speech impediment, his ears were opened, it says in verse 35, and his tongue was released and he spoke plainly.

He was helped. Because there is help for the helpless. That we see that he is there. And that we show others that he is there.

There was a woman called Florence Chadwick. She was the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. And she loved to swim.

[ 33 : 16 ] And she loved to take on a challenge. And in the early 50s, she went over to America and off the coast of California, swam from an island, the Catalina Island it's called, to the coast of California.

It's about 26 miles. First time she attempted it, it wasn't the distance that was the big challenge to her. It was the temperature of the water. Freezing cold water.

And then, after a time of swimming, a dense fog came down. She'd been 15 hours in the water. And she was only a mile from the coastline, where she would finish, when she had to give up.

And she said, I couldn't see the coast. I was exhausted, and I couldn't see the land. But it didn't put her off.

And a few months later, she tried it again. And she swam again. And then as she was doing the swim, once again, this fog came down. But instead of panicking this time, she assured herself, by just saying to herself again and again, the coast is there.

[ 34 : 32 ] Just keep going. And she made it to land. And she broke the record for swimming that distance by two hours. And it's a reminder to ourselves, just like the coast can seem to disappear in the fog, God can seem to disappear in the fog as well.

And we can get to that stage where we feel he's not there. And it's easy to see we give up. We give up praying for someone. We give up pushing on in this situation that we find ourselves in.

We give up in all kinds of ways. But what we see here is this woman and this man. No one gave up on them. And neither did Jesus.

Hopeless situation. Help was there. Help of the helpless was there. He was there to abide with them.

When you look at the end of this section in verse 37, it says, the people were astonished beyond measure, saying, he has done all things well.

[ 35 : 44 ] That is what Jesus is able to do. When we put our trust in him, there are still crumbs from the master's table for all who will come by faith.

Crumbs that will help us to be called the children of God. When we come by faith, in the most impossible and helpless and hopeless situations, there is help for the helpless in Christ.

Remember that for ourselves. And remember it for those around us too. For the many who seem helpless and hopeless, that there is help in Christ.

Come to him. Point others to him. Even in the midst of the fog, when he seems to have disappeared in many ways, he is there as help for the helpless.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, as we come, we thank you that you are indeed there for us.

That even when our vision is impaired, when our faith may be dim, we thank you, Lord, that you are indeed that help for the helpless.

[ 37 : 04 ] And we pray, Lord, abide with us. Be with us, we pray. As we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 86 in the Scottish Psalter, page 340.

Psalm 86, page 340. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 5. O Lord, do thou bow down thine ear and hear me graciously, because I sore afflicted am, and am in poverty.

Because I am holy, let my soul by thee preserve it, O thou my God, thy servant save, that puts his trust in thee. We'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise.

O Lord, do thou bow down thine ear and hear me graciously, because I sore afflicted am, and am with poverty.

because I am holy, O Lord, do thou bless my soul, by thee preserve me.

[ 38 : 48 ] O God, my God, thy servant save, thy good's trust in thee.

trust in thee. Say thine unto thee, I daily high, be merciful to me.

rejoice, rejoice, thy servant soul, for Lord, I lift my soul to thee.

for thou art, O Lord, and ready to forgive, for him.

For thou art, and rich in mercy, all that call upon thee to relieve.

[ 40 : 20 ] After the benediction, I'll go to the main door and close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Yes, Thank you.