

When God Is Silent and Hope Is Hidden

by William Carrol

God may seem silent in times of need, but He is always present and patient, and persistence in prayer requires faith and trust in His character and promises.

Duration: 38:28

Scripture: Matthew 15:21

Topics: "Persistent Prayer", "Trusting God"

Description

This sermon focuses on the story of a woman from Matthew 15 and Mark 7 who persisted in seeking Jesus' help for her demon-possessed daughter despite initial silence and resistance. It emphasizes the importance of not giving up in prayer, fighting for others' lives, and trusting in God's compassion and love even when faced with challenges. The sermon encourages believers to continue praying with faith and persistence, especially when it seems like heaven is silent.

Transcript

Would you turn with me in your Bible to the book of Matthew, and we are going to begin reading in the 15th chapter, Matthew 15, and we will read from verse 21 through verse 28. Matthew 15, verse 21 through 28. Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

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, but he answered her, not a word. And his disciples came and urged him saying, send her away for she cries out after us.

But he answered and said, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she came and worshiped him saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.

And she said, yes, Lord. Yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith.

Let it be to you as you desire. And a daughter was healed from that very hour. Now I'm going to read to you a portion of scripture from the book of Mark that deals with the same circumstance.

And it's in Mark 7, 24. I'll just read it to you. From there he arose and went to the region of Tyre and Zion.

And he entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but he could not be hidden. What we see in the first portion is he answered her, not a word. And then we see, but he could not be hidden.

I want to talk to you this morning on the topic when God is silent and hope is hidden. And it's a story about a woman who would not let God hide and who would not let hope die. Let's pray together.

Holy spirit, we need you. We depend upon you and we know that you are trustworthy. You called us to this place so that we could fellowship one with another in your presence and expect that your name would be lifted up and glorified.

We thank you for everything that's gone on up until this point, Lord, what a glorious time of worship and praise and what a joy it is to give to the house of the Lord and to the needs of the needy. Now we're asking you to help us today to open your heart, open your word, to hear the voice of God so that there might be a word of promise spoken to that person who's been praying, that person who's been weary, that person who's needed a word in season. We're asking that your name be glorified.

We love you, Lord. And we thank you in Jesus. Holy name.

Amen. Praise God. Praise the Lord.

Now I want to begin by reminding you that there are going to be times in the life of every Christian person when it seems as though, as they say, the heavens are brass, when it seems as though the prayers go to the ceiling and bounce back to the floor. It just seems as though God is not listening. And I want to suggest again that there are times when even though God is always listening and always attentive to our prayers, there are times when he does not indicate it.

There are times in fact when he would have us to press a little harder and to push a little farther. And so there are times when he will seem to be silent and hope seems to be hidden. In the case of this woman, there was a very desperate need.

The Bible says that her daughter was severely tormented. And so the Lord was provoking in her a very severe kind of prayer. The kind of prayer that is necessary to engage severe circumstances.

Remember a certain time where a man had a son and his son was being tossed from the fire to the water, from extreme to extreme by an evil spirit. And whenever the disciples could not cast the spirit out, the Lord made it very clear that there are certain things that only come out through prayer and fasting. In other words, desperate times call for desperate measures.

And every now and again, the Lord will provoke us to become desperate in our prayers because the situation is desperate. And so in this particular case, you have a woman who comes to the Lord and the more she speaks to him, the more he seems to be provoking her to go deeper and to press harder and to push farther. But this woman had a reason to persist.

She had a reason to hope. And it begins with the idea that Jesus left the place where he was. He had been in Gennesaret.

He had been going back and forth with the Pharisees and with the scribes. And he left the region of Galilee and he left the confines of Israel and he went to where she was. He went to Tyre and Sidon and he began to give an indication.

Because we know that where the presence of Christ is, there is an indication of an invitation. In other words, if God is present, then a person should consider the fact that he wants them to address him. Now, the Bible says that he hid himself or that he was not looking to have visitors when he was in this house or resting.

But there is also this indication that he still wanted someone to press through. You see in the scriptures over and over again, the Lord will say, for instance, to Moses, get away from me because I'm about to destroy these people. And yet there was something in his voice.

It's hard sometimes when we read things on the page to sense the feeling and the emotion in the words. When God said to Moses, get away from me, we can't see it in the page. But as we turn those pages and we see the heart of God and we see his character and we see his mind, we can hear what Moses heard, not just the words, but the voice.

And so Jesus could have gone anywhere, but he went there. Just like the Bible says at another point that he needed to go through Samaria. You remember when he met the woman at the well, he needed to go there because she was there.

And you'll see it over and over again. Now he goes up to Tyre and Sidon, and I would suggest that just the fact that he was present should have given this woman a sense that she was welcome in his presence. She could tell that there was something special happening in that moment.

Now she could have simply said, oh well, he's just tired. He just wants to be alone. But there was something in her that took it personally.

As far as she was concerned, if God is present, he is present for me. If God is present, that means I can talk to him. If God is present, that means I can move in his direction.

And it's up to us to say when we're in a place like this, for instance, that I sense God's presence and I'm going to take that personally. I sense that God is here, so I'm going to approach him. And we could say, well, it's more generic.

He just happens to be here. This is church, and maybe he's here for this person or that person or the other person. Or we could say, no, God is present, and that means he's here for me.

That means he's going to say something to me. That means he's going to do something for me. That means I can approach him.

And that's the approach that she took. So it begins with the idea of the presence. He was where she was.

And even though it seems as though she initiated the conversation, I'm convinced that we never initiate a conversation with God. But God causes something to stir up in us. He causes us to approach him, causes us to cry out to him.

Even if he seems silent, the fact that I'm praying at all is an indication that he is active. The fact that I'm praying at all is an indication that he is moving my heart. Sometimes you'll read some of the psalms, and they'll say, where are you, God? You're so far from hearing me, and I can't seem to get through to you.

But then we remind ourselves that those psalms are inspired by God. God is the one that's causing that person to cry out and say, I don't know how to pray. God is the one that's causing that person to cry out

and say, I just can't seem to get through.

God is already provoking their heart. He's already initiating a conversation. Any conversation that you and I have with God is always initiated by God, even if it doesn't seem that way.

So in this particular case, the fact that he was where she was, he left where he had been, and he was where she was, was an indication to her that he was to be approached. Now, after the idea of the presence, then we come to the idea of the silence. She comes to him, and she begins to pour out her heart about her own daughter, about her child.

And instead of him moving directly, instead of him speaking directly, instead of him doing the thing that she had asked, he is silent. Now, I honestly believe that that silence is to give her a provocation to cry out all the louder. You see that in the scripture again and again and again, especially in those times when a person is acknowledging the fact that Jesus is the Messiah.

Very rarely do you see it in the scriptures, but whenever you see it, there's always the same thing. In other words, when a person uses the term Son of David, there is always somebody trying to shut them up, always somebody trying to shut them down. Whenever they were crying out, Hosanna, Hosanna to the Son of David, they tried to shut them down.

When the blind man began to say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, they tried to shut him down. Now, she's acknowledging his majesty. She's acknowledging his glory.

She's acknowledging the fact that he's Messiah. And again, the disciples are saying, send her away. Over and over again, you'll see it.

But this idea is that Jesus wants them to acknowledge who he is and what he can be to them and what he can do for them. And so sometimes, especially in desperate situations, he will be silent long enough for you and for me to continue to cry out, to ask and keep on asking, to knock and keep on knocking, to seek and keep on seeking, to not let go, but to hold on. And if it seems as though it's a little bit more difficult, it's because the times are more difficult.

The situation is more difficult. Everything that's involved now is extreme. And so the prayer has got to be extreme.

And sometimes if God moves too quickly, we don't know how to fight. We don't know how to hold on. You know, in the Bible, it talks about, you know, the people as they are crying out in the name of the Lord.

You know, they're talking about the well. They're talking about a well in the time of dryness. And they say, spring up, O well.

And there's something about them that begins to believe that something wonderful is going to happen. And there's something in their tone, something in their voice that says, I'm not going to stop until there is refreshment in this dry land. Spring up, O well, they cry out.

But when you and I lose that sense of intensity, we basically look at the well and say, spring up. And if nothing happens, we say, O well, and we move on. You see what I mean? But there is something that God is asking of us.

He's asking us to learn how to fight because the times are difficult. And so you see this woman, she doesn't get an immediate answer, but she persists. The people begin to tell her to shut up, but she persists.

And they're even asking God to shut her down, but she persists. And so it begins with this idea of his presence. And then we move into the idea of his silence.

And then we remind ourselves of his patience because he's crying, brother, she's crying out to him. And everybody is saying that she is becoming an annoyance or that she's becoming a problem. She's following after us and she won't shut up.

She won't shut up. She won't shut up. And you see the patience of God, not just with her, but with his disciples.

And he is allowing the situation because he understands her burden. He understands her need and he understands the short-sightedness of his disciples. They don't know at this stage of their life, what it is to have that kind of a need.

It doesn't fit the decorum. It's a little bit out of place. It doesn't fit the ordinary ritual or the ordinary liturgy.

It's a little bit out of place. This person is crying out. They're not just turning to him such and such and singing such and such a song.

They are crying out. Their heart is broken and the Lord is showing patience as he's listening to her cry and he's dealing with the mindset of his disciples. And that's happening all the time brothers and sisters.

We come to a house like this for instance and most of us are singing the songs that we sing in and we understand the lyrics and and we believe them from our hearts. But every now and again there's somebody who walks in whose heart is utterly broken and they might not be singing exactly in cadence with the rhythm and so on. So there's something that's different.

They're crying out from a different place. From the depth of their soul they're crying out for their son or they're crying out for their daughter. Somebody that they know has gone wayward.

Somebody that they know has gotten lost. Somebody that they know used to be this way but now they're that way and their heart is broken and they're wondering are they going to lose their child. Is the child going to entirely turn away from the Lord whether it's a young child or an adult child.

Their heart is broken and sometimes it feels like I don't feel like I'm in sync. I feel like I'm out of place and and yet we notice that the Lord is patient. That he's not saying why aren't you singing with the rest of the people.

I notice that your head is bowed or why aren't you singing with the rest of the people. I know that while they're cheering you're weeping. Why you know but then there's something that says but God is patient with me.

He knows that my heart is as toward him as everybody else's. He knows that I love him just like I love or just like everybody else loves him but there is a burden and I want to cry out to God and acknowledge it and to know that God is not ashamed of your tears. That God is not ashamed of your pain.

That God is not ashamed of your hurt. He's not ashamed of your questions. It's to know that the God that you serve is patient and little by little he begins to move and he says something to her now for the first time and he says I'm not sent except for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

In essence there is a resistance. He puts up a resistance because again the bible says that up until a certain point the kingdom of heaven allows violence and the violent take it by force. There comes a time when you and I have got to fight through even if it seems as though God himself is resisting us.

You see it in the scripture again and again if God was actually resisting her she'd have never gotten that far.

If God was actually resisting her he would not have been in her region but he was where he was and he was listening even though everybody else was trying to shut her down because the resistance that he put up was so that she would not shut up but that she would persist that she would cry out even more that she would recognize that this is an actual battle that this is not simply a ritual that prayer is war and if I'm fighting for somebody's life if I'm fighting for somebody's soul I'm going to fight as hard as the battle requires and I'm not going to stop I'm not going to quit until I take the victory because there are times in life hallelujah when only victory will do and when we fight against the devil only victory will do because he has no mercy he takes no prisoners and we fight as

though every life matters and so in this particular case there is this woman who is fighting for her daughter and the lord is saying in essence fight harder fight harder fight harder fight harder don't let go don't let go don't let go keep on keeping on keep on praying keep on believing and it seems as though there's a wall but he's given her an opportunity to break through that wall and she recognizes it so there is the presence then there is the silence then there's the patience and the resistance and in her case there is the persistence she just won't stop she realizes that if I stop my daughter dies if I stop there is no hope and every now and again we need god to provoke us to continue in the battle because sometimes as we fight for human souls as we fight for men and women's lives

sometimes it seems as though the battle is too much for us and there is no doubt about the fact that as far as our flesh goes the battle is too much for us but the bible says with man it's impossible but with god all things are possible hallelujah you remember elijah he's going to a certain point and he gets tired he gets weary he's fighting for the soul of israel and it just seems as though he's beating his head against the wall and he just kind of walks away from it and then the lord meets him on the road and he says to elijah get up and eat because the journey is too much for you and there comes a time when the lord will spur us on and he will say i need you to take this thing to the next level because the thing that i want to do in you i can only do in a person who is severe about

these things the thing that i want to do in you i can only do in a person who is extreme about these things a person who gives these things everything that they are who's not ashamed who's not afraid she had to acknowledge some things about herself she had to acknowledge it just like when you and i enter into the presence of the lord there is always going to be promise but there's also going to be conviction and they're going to be other things and we have to say look either i belong here or i don't either what christ did on calvary is enough or it's not and i know that what christ did on calvary is more than adequate more than sufficient and so i belong here and i'm going to cry out to god for human lives and human souls and this is what she did she persisted he gave her an analogy about

the children's bread and so on and so forth and all she did was she stretched that analogy out even farther yes lord i acknowledge that but this that and the other he was asking for that because she began to argue if you will in the good sense of the word based upon his compassion but i know i know i'm not worthy but i know that you are compassionate i know that i'm not worthy but i know that you are good i know that i'm not worthy but i know what jesus did for me on calvary i know that i belong here i know that i've been told that i'm to enter into this place of grace with boldness i'm supposed to cry out to you i'm supposed to believe you i'm supposed to hope in you because you are good and your mercy endures forever and i know that you love my daughter i know that she was yours before

she was mine and i know that you're going to help her i know that you're going to heal her i know that there's bread i know that there's bread to spare i know that god can hear my cry and god can feed my child i know it she said even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table she said i might not be what i'm supposed to be but you're still my master you're still my savior you're still my deliverer you're still my healer you're still my provider and that's where she stood and that's what he wanted for her to fight through and to believe what she already knew to be about his character she called him lord she bowed down before him she called him son of david she knew something about him she wasn't from israel she's probably a proselyte probably a god fearer but she knew

something about everybody was lost at that time you know what i mean he said i came to save the lost sheep of israel but then there were people who began to just put their faith in him not based on their own righteousness not based on their own strength not based on anything that they deserved but on the fact that he is merciful that he is good the presence the silence the patience the resistance the persistence the acceptance joyfully he cried out oh woman great is your faith he's saying to her that even if it's hard for you to hope for a promise you chose to believe in a person you chose to put your faith in god sometimes for you and for me it's hard to believe in a promise when it seems so far away you remember abraham and sarah they had a difficult time believing the promise and even

when they believed it they tried to kind of tweak it their own way and make it happen in their own strength but what was their saving grace is that they believed in the person who made the promise the difference between faith and hope is hope is in a promise faith is in a person like i say it's it's sort of like it's like a check where hope is in the amount line right and faith is in the signature line you know right if somebody gives you a million dollar check and they sign a mickey mouse you're not gonna take it to the bank you see what i mean it's in the name that we put our faith and she believed in the compassion of god in the mercy of god and if god is who he is then he'll do what he said he will do and so jesus heard that amen and he said great is your faith and then finally after

the presence in the silence after the patience at the resistance and persistence after acceptance there is deliverance her daughter from that moment was free hallelujah because there was something of fight in her there was something that would not let the circumstances dictate whether or not she believed her faith was in god it was something that said to her if i don't fight for her she's gonna die and so she fought she had to humble herself she had to come to grips with her own weakness she had to deal with people trying to shut her down and tell her don't don't bother she had to deal with the fact that she wasn't always in sync with everybody else that what she was doing didn't seem as tidy as some of the things that the disciples might have wanted to see but she chose to fight because

she understood this was a life or death situation sometimes a silent heaven is just inviting you and me to fight harder to push just a little bit farther this is a story of a woman who would not let god hide and who

would not let hope die now i want to pray with you this morning specifically for any person who's praying for a son or daughter grandson granddaughter mother or father co-worker somebody that you know is being lied to somebody that you know is in a desperate situation and you want to come to god and say lord you know that the circumstances themselves dictate that i should just give up and let go but i'm not going to allow circumstances to determine what i do i'm going to ask you to help me help me god give me the grace to keep on praying give me the grace to keep on believing

give me the grace to keep on reaching out to them give me the grace to keep on loving them give me the grace god i need grace to persist in this prayer to persist in this ministry some people have biological children some have spiritual children people that you've led to the lord or that you've spoken to about god and you're saying god please help me to help them god give me a fight help me to overcome this idea that heaven is silent help me to fight through until i see a victory like this woman saw until i hear god exclaim in the spirit great is your faith i want to pray with you this morning i'm going to join you at this altar if you will i'm going to ask god to help me keep on praying for some of my family members i'm going to ask god to help me to not give up to not let go with man

it's impossible with god all things are possible and we're going to see some great deliverance people saved people healed people freed let's stand together in the house of the lord if god is speaking to you you can begin to come to the front of this auditorium where we'll pray together if you're on the ground floor you come on the balcony you come we'll wait for you if you're in the annex you can stand between the screens and of course if you're in north jersey you can do the same we're expecting god to do something wonderful we're going to fight today not in our own strength but in the name of the lord jesus christ we're going to believe god for something wonderful we'll sing a couple of songs in his name and then we'll come together and pray in the name of the glorious savior amen

hallelujah praise the lord i have a word from the lord i'm for any person who's feeling that you don't hear god the way you used to you you don't have that sense of his presence like you had in the past i want to suggest to you that the older you get in christ the more of a difference it makes when you pray the older you get in christ the more it matters that you pray the more people depend on the fact that you pray until the harder it gets the more it's going to be resisted and so the lord would have you to realize that when you were younger most of your prayers had to do with you growing and developing and changing even though you were praying for other people what was happening is you were growing as you were growing as a compassionate person but now what you do affects many many lives

and you're fighting for the lives of others and when you fight for other people the burden is greater the resistance is greater and so we have to push harder and so the lord sometimes makes it so it's harder to pray so that we can learn how to pray with a sense of severity we begin to pray extreme prayers we begin to believe for great things and we begin to impact the world because every time we go into the prayer closet now we're bringing souls with us and so don't be discouraged because it's a little bit harder it's supposed to be harder because you got that much more weight that many more are depending on you you're fighting for lives now you're fighting for souls now and your victories are eternal now hallelujah hallelujah bless his name hallelujah so keep on keeping on don't let go

don't let go and then for those who are praying for children you're praying for sometimes adult children and you feel like they've kind of gone far astray don't let go don't give up don't give up every now and again you'll hear something that convicts your heart you know that says well you should have done this you could have done that don't worry about that you acknowledge lord i'm not perfect and i didn't do everything

right but i trust you i trust your mercy i trust your compassion i trust your love i trust the fact that they were yours before they were mine and you watch what god does father in the name of jesus we come to you and we acknowledge your goodness we put our faith in your name we put our faith in your compassion we put our faith in the fact that you love our sons you love

our daughters you love our friends our neighbors our parents you love the people that you've asked us to fight for even if sometimes those battles seem to be fruitless or even thankless sometimes we know that we are where we're supposed to be we are fighting the right fight we are winning lives we are winning freedom we are winning victories we are giving people an opportunity to be free help us lord with men it's impossible but with god all things are possible hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah and so we're going to trust you oh jesus we're going to trust you to do miracles to do great signs and wonders to bring remarkable freedom help us jesus to help somebody when we feel like giving up just give us that extra strength give us that extra push help us to help somebody and we will thank

you for it oh god and bless you for it in jesus holy name we pray amen amen amen

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