

WALK YOUR TALK

Jesus Dismissed Her

Who Is My Neighbor? · Week Two

Rev. Blaine Tinsley · Unity on Maui · Sunday, August 30, 2026

A SURPRISING PARALLEL

Dolly Parton — who left us a few days ago — spent her early career being dismissed. Too poor. Too flashy. Too country. Too much. She refused to accept it and enlarged the circle by refusing to leave the room. Today we sit with another woman who refused to leave the room. She has no name in Scripture, known only by what she was *not* — not Jewish, not male, not inside the circle. And she changed the teacher.

THE STORY — MATTHEW 15:21–28

This talk challenges the familiar picture many of us carry of Jesus — the one who floated three inches above the ground, never misunderstood anyone, never had a bad day. The Jesus in this story is fully human, shaped by his culture, and then stretched beyond it by a woman with no status and no invitation — only a daughter who was suffering.

"Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

A Canaanite woman — Gentile, foreigner, outsider — shouts these words at Jesus. She had every reason to stay silent. Love made her bold.

THE THREE DISMISSALS

The First Dismissal: Silence. "He did not answer her at all." Sometimes the deepest rejection is not a harsh word — it is the conversation that continues as though you were not there. The first question this story asks is not, "Whom have I openly rejected?" It is:

Whose voice have I learned not to hear?

The Second Dismissal: Policy. The disciples said, "*Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.*" Not: "Jesus, her daughter is suffering." Her pain had become an inconvenience. Exclusion does not always arrive with anger — sometimes it arrives as inconvenience. Jesus responded: "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" Exclusion often sounds perfectly reasonable. But every boundary must answer:

Is this boundary serving love, or is it protecting us from love's demands?

The Third Dismissal: The Metaphor. The woman knelt and said, "*Lord, help me.*" Jesus replied: "*It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.*" Some soften this by noting the Greek word means a small household dog — perhaps Jesus was not calling her a wild dog; perhaps he was calling her a puppy. But whether wild dog or household pet, the structure is the same: one group sits at the table, the other waits beneath it. We do not have to protect Jesus from the discomfort of this story. Perhaps the discomfort is precisely where the revelation is waiting.

SHE STEPPED INTO THE METAPHOR

"Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

She did not reject the metaphor — she stepped into it: if you insist on placing me beneath the table, then look beneath the table; grace is already falling here. She did not ask Jesus to take food from anyone. She challenged the assumption that mercy was scarce. The disciples operated from **scarcity**: there is only enough healing for our people. The woman operated from **abundance**: if this power comes from God, there must be enough love for my daughter. Faith is not pretending the boundary is not there. Faith is knowing God is greater than the boundary.

THE TEACHER IS STRETCHED

"Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

The woman who began as an interruption ended as an example of great faith. The greatness of Jesus may not be that no one could ever teach him anything — it may be that he was open enough to receive truth from anyone, even a foreigner, even a woman, even someone his culture said was beneath the table. Spiritual maturity is not the inability to be wrong. It is the **willingness to be changed by truth**.

THREE WAYS TO LET LOVE STRETCH US

- **Notice the silence.** Pay attention to voices you have stopped hearing. Before you prepare your defense — listen. Conscious silence can become sacred listening.
- **Question the boundary.** When you hear "that is just the way it is," become curious. Is this boundary serving love, or keeping love at a safe distance?
- **Let the encounter change you.** Listen with the possibility that you may leave seeing something differently. The ego says, "If I change my mind, I lose." The Christ within says, "If truth enlarges my heart, everyone wins."

DIVINE LOVE IS NOT SCARCE

The woman asked for crumbs, but the story reveals there was always enough bread. **Healing one person does not diminish the healing available to another.** There is enough love, enough mercy, enough belonging. The table was never meant to be guarded — it was meant to be extended.

THE INVITATION

This week, listen for the voice outside your familiar circle. Ask: *"What truth might this person be carrying? What am I unable to see from my seat at the table?"* The person you are tempted to dismiss may be carrying the next truth your soul needs.

AFFIRMATION

I open my heart beyond the boundaries I have known. I listen for truth in every voice. Divine love stretches me, changes me, and welcomes everyone to the table.

A BLESSING FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DISMISSED

Go now — your cry has been heard. Not eventually. Not conditionally. Now, by a Love that requires no qualification. Grace has no border. May you learn from those the world placed beneath the table, discover there has always been enough, and remember you were never meant to guard it. Go in peace. Go in love. Let the circle widen. **And so it is.**