



Aug. 20, 2017 Mt. 15: 21-28 & Is. 56: 1, 6-7

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Creative Power of Love](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Tyranny of the Program](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

We ricochet from Peter's flagging faith to the pagan woman's great faith today. Jesus has gone to a pagan territory to withdraw. But even here, there is no withdrawal possible. When someone loves enough, like this woman does her daughter, nothing or no one will intimidate or frustrate the search for wholeness. We find the woman teaching Jesus that his mission is greater than he thought. That God wants everyone included, and it is not an either/or proposition. The disturbance of Jesus' 'meditation time' becomes the answer to the great eternal question of who is included in God's love. The answer is everyone. When we love enough we know this to be true. Take some time to choose a place in this room. Explore how you feel about what is happening in your midst. What are you learning from the woman?

Mt. 15:21-28

21 **Leaving that place**, Jesus **withdrew** to the region of **Tyre** and **Sidon**. 22 A **Canaanite woman** from that vicinity came to him, **crying out**, "**Lord, Son of David**, have **mercy** on me! My **daughter** is **suffering** terribly from **demon-possession**." 23

Jesus **did not answer** a word. So his disciples came to him and

urged him, "**Send her away**, for she keeps **crying out** after us." 24 He **answered**, "**I was sent** only to the **lost sheep of Israel**." 25 The **woman** came and **knelt** before him. "**Lord, help me!**" she said. 26 He **replied**, "It is **not right** to take the **children's bread** and toss it to their **dogs**." 27 Yes, **Lord**," she said, "but even the **dogs** eat the **crumbs** that fall from their **masters' table**." 28 Then Jesus **answered**, "**Woman**, you have **great faith!** Your **request** is **granted**." And her **daughter** was healed from that **very hour**."

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** This mother will not let anything stop her from going to Jesus with her daughter's need. Do you feel as brave as this woman when you go to God for help? If not, why?

**PRAYER:** Student Jesus, this mother today shows you a larger form of God's vision. You may have thought just bringing the Word to your own people would be a big enough bite to take on, but her great love challenges you to take on all of God's people. So often I bite off small nibbles of the love you offer, when you are daring me to eat the whole loaf. Help me as I learn to gobble down all that you have to offer me. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**LEAVING THAT PLACE / WITHDREW:** Once again we find Jesus trying to escape the incessant press of the needy crowds and the hostility of the religious authorities.

*Why do you think Matthew makes such a point of this? What does this tell you about Jesus? The disciples? The early church?*

**TYRE / SIDON / CANAANITE:** Even though these foreign places afforded Jesus some relative security, they did not give him a reprieve from increasing crush of people's needs.

*What does this tell you about those days or about the ability of the 'outsiders' to see who Jesus really is? Have you ever had to 'leave home' in order to see more clearly?*

**CRYING OUT / MERCY / LORD HELP ME / KNELT / REQUEST:** This mother will not be deterred from her desperate quest by anything. She will do whatever it takes to be heard.

*Have you ever loved that much? Has anyone ever loved you that much?*

**LORD, SON OF DAVID / MASTER:** Evidently, Jesus was well known enough in this place that our woman knows just what to call him so as to indicate that she understands what he is all about. Those who should have known, refuse to acknowledge what she cries out freely.

*Why do you think this mother could see what others refused to see?*

**WOMAN / DAUGHTER:** The most devalued people in the world of Jesus' day were women and children, especially girls.

*How does knowing this help to enlarge the meaning of this story? What does this teach about Jesus' God?*

**SUFFERING / HEALED:** Both the mother and the girl were suffering, and both received healing.

*Have you ever been in the spot that this mother was in? That her daughter was in? If so, how does that help you to get what Jesus is about here?*

**DEMON POSSESSION:** All evil or misfortune was attributed to an evil spirit. The mother recognizes that Jesus' spirit was stronger than whatever evil spirit possessed her daughter.

*Do you believe that God's spirit of love is stronger than any 'spirit' of evil/death?*

**DID NOT ANSWER / ANSWERED / REPLIED:** Jesus is moved from silence to response by the suffering and the mother's courage and faith.

*When was the last time you came forward in response to someone's need by their witness of faith and courage?*

**SEND HER AWAY / NOT RIGHT:** Once again, the disciples want Jesus to send away that which they saw to be a distraction or impediment to their agenda. Jesus seems to agree with them when he tells the woman that it is not right for him to get involved.

*Have you missed any chances to love because you were too narrow in your understanding of God's will for your life? If so, have you broadened your understanding since then?*

**LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL / CHILDREN:** Because Jesus had narrowed his mission to the lost sheep of Israel, and instructed his disciples to do the same, he is confronted with a challenge to his own self-understanding.

*Have you ever been moved to a deeper understanding of who you are by someone's need?*

**DOGS:** If you wanted to hurl an insult to someone even today, you might call them a SOB. In the original language, the word Jesus used is more closely associated with a household pet. In either event, the harshness of Jesus' response presses the mother to extreme measures.

*Does Jesus' harshness startle you? What effect does it have on the woman? When Jesus uses a 'softened' word for a cruel one, does this provide the woman an opening?*

**BREAD / CRUMBS:** The woman catches the challenge of Jesus and responds with her own challenge by quickly stating that even the crumbs will do.

*Have you ever wanted something so desperately that you found yourself, like this mother, overcoming all apparent obstacles and finding wisdom in yourself that you didn't know you possessed?*

**GREAT FAITH:** Here is the only account in this gospel where someone is told to have had great faith.

*What effect do you think this experience had on the disciples? Have you ever stood by while someone else, possibly someone you deemed unworthy, received acknowledgment for their worthiness? If so, how did you feel?*

**GRANTED:** The woman and her daughter received what they needed.

*Has your faith ever freed you from some form of possession? Did Jesus receive anything in this encounter?*

**VERY HOUR:** The freedom from 'possession' was achieved without delay.

*Have you ever experienced an immediate freedom because of your faith in God's unconditional love?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 15:21-28 // Mk. 7: 24-30; Mt. 15: 25 // Mt. 10:6; Rom. 15:8; Mt. 15: 28 // Mt. 8:10;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Is. 56: 1, 6-7; [Ps. 67: 2-8](#); Rom. 11: 13-15, 29-32; Mt. 15: 21-28; Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 45: 1-15; [Ps. 133](#); Rom. 15: 10-28; Mt. 15:21-28;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

He (Matthew) and his Jewish community of followers of Jesus lived in a time of crisis. The temple had been leveled and its remnants burnt by the Roman army, in a violent demonstration of what they conceived as the superior power of their gods. Judaism was in disarray, its center gone, many of its communities—temple priests, Levites, Essenes, even the Zealots on Masada—eliminated. Where

was the future of Judaism? The Jewish historian Josephus, accepting the lesson of the destruction, said that God had gone over to the Romans. The new-born rabbinic movement, successors of the Pharisees, proposed that the new temple was the holy book. The future they envisioned came to be in what we call today rabbinic Judaism. But Matthew had a message for Judaism: The future lay in the faith community that proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. And he shows Jesus making that claim explicitly: "I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The Canaanite Woman was not Jewish. We see here an early concession that the movement would turn beyond Israel to the Gentiles. Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 157-8.

"A belief may be comforting. Only through your own experience, however, does it become liberating." Eckhart Tolle

Faith is not some hard, unchanging thing you cling to through the vicissitudes of life. Those who try to make it into this are destined to become brittle, shatterable creatures. Faith never grows harder, never so deviates from its nature and becomes actually destructive, than in the person who refuses to admit that faith is change. I don't mean simply that faith changes (though there is that). I mean that just as any sense of divinity that we have comes from the natural order of things — is in some ultimate sense within the natural order of things — so too faith is folded into change, is the mutable and messy process of our lives rather than any fixed, mental product. Those who cling to the latter are inevitably left with nothing to hold on to, or left holding on to some nothing into which they have poured the best parts of themselves. -- Poet Christian Wiman

The word *faith* comes from the Latin word *fides*, and its primary meaning is "trust." Stephen Bullivant

Our faithfulness will depend on our willingness to go where there is brokenness, loneliness, and human need. If the church has a future it is a future with the poor in whatever form. -Henri J.M. Nouwen

St. Paul says that God both initiates and cooperates in all human growth. God "works together with" us, which means both our workings are crucial. Every moment, God is trying to expand our freedom. Can you imagine that? God is trying to make this choice more alive, more vital, more clear, more true. God even uses our mistakes and our sin in that regard. Nothing at all is wasted. If that is not the providence of God, what else would be "providential"? The provident care of God is that God is working for our wholeness and for our full liberation—probably more than we are. Richard Rohr: Radical Grace: Daily Meditations, p. 187, day 200

God looked into His heart long ago and fell so much in love with us that He created us out of sheer love. Love, you see, is the explanation of all that is Good. \_ Catherine of Siena, "Letters"

It is wonderful how the exercise of one's will in a matter like this will eventuate in the correct emotions. Determining to wish that person's good; deliberately trying to do something loving for him; and praying for him - all this will someday bring about the emotion of love itself. But love, as the Bible interprets it, is an affair of the will, not necessarily of the emotions. - Isobel Kuhn

"This is the nature of love: to the extent that we distance ourselves from the center of the circle and do not love God, we distance ourselves from our neighbor; but if we love God, then the nearer we draw to him in love, the more we are united with our neighbor in love." Dorotheus of Gaza, "Instructions"



Slowness remembers and hurry forgets; softness remembers and hardness forgets; surrender remembers and fear forgets. Pg. 22 Nepo, Mark. The Book of Awakening. Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000.

**SIDON:** the first Phoenician city to be founded has long been known for the beauty of its landscape, the fertility of its plain, and the quality and variety of its fruits. Being old, it has many ruins, only a few of which have been excavated 'Sidon's main archaeological interest however, lies in the fragments of mosaic pavements on the north, its hill of millions of broken murex shells (from which purple dye was extracted) on the southwest, its famous cemetery on the plain southeastward, and its large ruin of a Crusader castle. Ernest Renan, a French scholar, excavated here in 1860- but did little more than "map the city of the dead," uncover ancient coins, and make a few minor discoveries. He suspected that he had come "fifty years too late.

**TYRE:** the most famous seaport of ancient Bible lands, was located twenty miles south of Sidon, on an island three quarters of a mile from the mainland. It had two harbors, one on the north and

one on the south and its walls were exceedingly high, especially on the landward side. Here artisans made bronze, silver, and other artistic wares, and here was manufactured the purple dye that made Tyre famous. Its merchants trafficked with the many lands of the Mediterranean and even with the far away British Isles. Tyre became a "city of renown, peopled by men of the sea" (Eze.26: 17). Kings and military men from many countries laid siege to Tyre, but were unable to take the city until m 333 bc., Alexander the Great besieged and took it after seven months. But Tyre rose slowly again and became a center of trade in Roman times. In recent centuries, however, the place has been small. Its harbors are strewn with ruins and are little more than "a place to spread fishnets" (Eze.26: 14). The little red square on the coast of the Mediterranean (upper left) is Tyre, and Sidon is just north of it along the coast. By leaving Galilee, Jesus withdraws in order to have more uninterrupted time with the disciples. It is there where the mission to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" ends, and the early acceptance of the Gentiles begins. These cities are 30-50 miles NW of Gennesaret in Phoenicia

To know God without being God-like is like trying to swim without entering water. Orest Bedrij

"Holy One, how shall I know the difference between knowledge and enlightenment?" The Holy One said "When you have knowledge, you light a torch to find your way. When you have enlightenment you become a torch to show the way." Zen saying

The coming to consciousness is not a discovery of some new thing; it is a long and painful return to that which has always been. Helen Luke

"... Finally, about being united with God's will: I don't mean that you should specially formulate this in words frequently but rather just develop a habitual awareness and conviction that you are completely in His hands and His love is taking care of you in everything, that you need have no special worries about anything, past present or future, as long as you are sincerely trying to do what He seems to ask of you. And of course by that I mean simply what is called for by the obvious needs of the moment, duties of state, people you meet, events to cope with, sicknesses, mistakes, and so on. 'When hungry eat, when tired sleep.' "

Merton, Thomas. *The Hidden Ground of Love* by (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1985), page 526

Those who attempt to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening their own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. They will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of their own obsessions, their aggressiveness, their ego-centered ambitions, their delusions about ends and means, their doctrinaire prejudices and ideas. There is nothing more tragic in the modern world than the misuse of power and action to which people are driven by their own Faustian misunderstandings and misapprehensions. We have more power at our disposal today than we have ever had, and yet we are more alienated and estranged from the inner ground of meaning and of love than we have ever been."

Merton, Thomas. *Contemplation in a World of Action*. Double & Company, Inc., Image Books, Garden City, NY, 1973. Page 164).

The unbelieving mind would not be convinced by any proof, and the worshiping heart needs none.

- A. W. Tozer (1897-1963), *The Knowledge of the Holy*

The acid test of our faith in the promises of God is never found in the easy-going, comfortable ways of life, but in the great emergencies, the times of storm and of stress, the days of adversity, when all human aid fails. Ethel Bell

Risk all for love, Jesus tells us, even your own life. Give that to me and let me save it. The healthy religious person is the one who allows God to do the saving. It always feels like a loss of power and certitude at the beginning, which is why it is called faith, and why true Biblical faith is probably somewhat rare. Richard Rohr

Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Christian faith, in the face of all pessimism about the future of matter, affirms that, through God's grace, our evolving world can and will arrive at immediacy with God. It affirms that even now it has begun an irreversible stage of its history. Pg. 96.

Denis Edwards. *Jesus and the Cosmos*

Sometimes you say to yourself: the fire in me is going out. But you were not the one who lit that fire. Your faith does not create God, and your doubts cannot banish Him to nothingness. - Brother Roger of Taizé

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014*. Pgs. 157-161. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008*. Pgs. 129-132. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2001*. Pgs 124-128.. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)