Sermon Notes: June 14, 2026 Lectionary Readings
Focus: Jesus gets religion

I always pause when I see Jesus not acting like an opened minded 21st Century person. Last week, he was irritating leaders in ways that please me, but this week he seems insular and rude in ways that don't please me. So, I want to cobble together some verses to help me understand why Jesus could be so rude. Let's pull out two sections from the reading today, and then later add in Matthew 15. What bugged me was "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans."

Blinding flash of obvious insight: Jesus was shaped by his culture. He lived and breathed the classism and racism of his day. Samaritans = feckless and dirty. Gentiles = dangerous and dirty. But I see someone evolving so profoundly that he would ultimately make ministry to people outside Judaism central figures in his reconciling and healing ministry.

> *Matthew 9 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

This labor of harvest was for Jews of the Sea of Galilee - Not the Temple center, not the capital city. His focus was regular people *who were Jews* to bless fellow Jews. This is clear a few verses later.

> *"Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.*

Put on your mask first He will evolve in his views dramatically later, but for now I wonder if this charge above has an element of those preflight instructions we all ignore. "In case the cabin loses pressure please put on your mask first before helping others." Maybe he had a vision of his own people being so renewed that they would transform the whole world. His vision would need adaptation as it met with his people's reluctance and resistance.

Now skip to Chapter 15. Jesus and religious leaders were at odds over specifically what it took to be God chosen:

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

> *8 "'These people honor me with their lips,*
> *but their hearts are far from me.*
> *9 They worship me in vain;*
> *their teachings are merely human rules.*

His dream of a renewed people sorely needed updating.
The Update his evolution began when the Syrophenician woman shows up.

> *21 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 demon-possessed and suffering terribly." 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." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.*

I think this was Jesus finding his own oxygen mask. This woman shook him awake. He was still absolutely committed to bringing the Kingdom of God near, but she opened his eyes to the broader strokes of God's vision. You can see the broad strokes in the chapters that follow.

- **Feeding of the four thousand** happened in the Gentile region of the Decapolis. *Matthew 15:31* "They glorified *the God of Israel*" - Many were not Jews giving this glory.
- **Receptive outsiders and resistant insiders.** *Matthew 21:43* "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits." The door beyond a tribal/ethnic Israel opens wider.
- **Wedding Banquet** *Matthew 22:1–10 "*Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find." In the Parable of the Wedding Banquet, the original guests refuse the invitation. The guest list expands dramatically beyond the original invitees.
- **Gentile and the Passion** Matthew 27:54 "Truly this was God's Son!" At the crucifixion, the Roman soldiers witness Jesus' death. The outsider gets the message deep in his bones
- **The new/old mission** Matthew 28:19–20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." The Greek phrase *panta ta ethnē* means "all nations" or "all peoples," including Gentiles. The outsiders and insiders are in the same boat.

This is a long way of saying that Jesus got his oxygen mask on and found joy in an ever-widening vision of God's reign.

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