

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I. Who is the Different

A. Her name was **Linda**

1. And despite our differences, she played an important role in my life.
2. You may not believe it, but when I was in Kindergarten I was very shy and withdrawn.
3. I had to take MORNINING Kindergarten twice – because I still took a nap in the afternoon.
4. You know, go to school – come home and eat lunch with **Sheriff John** – take a nap – sounds like a pretty good routine to me.
5. Anyway, I was pretty shy in class and often kept to myself, and the teacher was talking about having me stay back and repeat Kindergarten.
6. And then this NEW GIRL came to our class.
7. Her name was **Linda**.
8. And I began to take her under my wing and show her around and how to do things.
9. We became inseparable – my parents used to joke she was my first girlfriend.
10. And as a result, I came out of my shell, and we both went on to first grade together.

B. It was years later when I found out that Linda was African American.

1. We couldn't have been more different.

2. Yet in those days of innocence – none of that seemed to matter – she was **Linda** – a girl alone in a new place, and I could help her know what to do.

3. We moved at the end of 1st grade – and I lost track of **Linda** – but I know she played an important part in helping me be who I am, for she helped to bring me out and opened in me that HELPER who is a significant part of who I am, and what I am, and how I got to be here today.

C. All of that brings me to the question: Who is the **different one** in your life?

1. Who do you encounter in your life on a regular basis that is different from you? And how do you respond?

2. Who is the different one in your life?

- The one who doesn't look like you, or talk like you, or has different priorities than you – who is the different one?

3. And how do you react to them?

4. The author of our NT reading puts it:

“If a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say ‘Have a seat here, please,’ while to the one who is poor you say, ‘Sit there,’ or, ‘Sit at my feet,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”

5. So I'll ask you once again, WHO is the different one and HOW do you respond to them?

II Jesus and the Woman

A. That's what's really going on in the two stories in our Gospel reading today, especially the first one.

1. Jesus and his Disciples have left Galilee and are in Gentile Country.

2. Perhaps, Jesus wanted to get away for a little R&R, maybe he wanted a break from battling with the Religious Authorities and from the crowds?

3. But in any event, he and his Disciples don't really want to be known.

B. So, when this woman shows up begging Jesus to heal her daughter, that's the last thing he wants to deal with.

1. He tries to put her off and says some pretty rude things – equating her and the Gentiles with unclean dogs – and says the Jews come first.

2. But she persists, and in the kind of banter much appreciated in that time, she says to Jesus, that even dogs get the **crumbs** that fall from the Children's table.

3. Jesus was so impressed with her and with her faith, that he healed her daughter, right then and there.

4. You can almost hear him say with a chuckle in his voice, "For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter."

C. But the focus here is not so much on Jesus' healing, but on the fact that he is **breaking down boundaries** of geography, ethnicity, and religious purity to extend the Kingdom of God to all who would receive it – and thus he opens the way for the mission to the Gentiles.

1. Jesus is saying that there are no barriers – and all who wish to receive the Kingdom of God are welcome.

2. So, WHO is the different one and HOW do you respond to them?

3. It's this same point the author of our NT lesson is making – that we need to welcome everyone – and that distinctions are wiped out.

4. Bottom line – we need to respond everyone!

5. And we respond to them not so that we can INFLICT our beliefs and ideas on them, but rather we respond to help them in their need and in their exploration of their own relationship with God.

III. Responding in Action

A. So, I'll ask you once again, WHO is the different one and HOW do you respond to them?

1. Again the author of our NT lesson gives us some clues when he writes:

“If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what’s the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”

2. In other words, you have to back up what you **say** and what you **believe** with what you **do**.

3. We have to be willing to reach out to those who are different from us, not to try and change THEM – whoever the THEM is – but to reach out in love and concern, to hear them and help them with their needs.

4. Let me tell you about a person who did just that.

B. Last Thursday, we celebrated [Prudence Crandall](#), who was born in 1803 into a Quaker family and was educated in arithmetic, the sciences, and Latin at the New England Friends Boarding School in Rhode Island.



1. The Quakers believed that women should be educated, and it was in the environment of the Friend's Boarding School that Prudence's passion for teaching was first awakened.

2. In 1831, she started a girl's school in Canterbury, Connecticut, where she educated the daughters of the town's wealthy families.

3. Her school was quickly ranked as one of the state's best schools, her rigorous curriculum provided female students with an education comparable to that of prominent schools for boys.

4. In 1833, Prudence admitted a young African American girl named Sarah Harris – thus establishing the first integrated school in the U.S.

- Harris wanted an education so that she could in turn teach other African American children.

5. The parents of the white children at the school were outraged and demanded that Sarah Harris be expelled, but Prudence refused.

6. When the white parents withdrew their children, Crandall transformed her boarding school into one for African American girls (the first school of its kind in the United States).

7. That, too, met with hostility from local white men who feared that it would draw more African Americans into their community.

8. The White townspeople continuously protested Crandall's school.

9. When African American students ventured beyond the school, they were met with taunts, threats and violence.

- Some whites pelted them with eggs, stones or manure – her well was poisoned and the townspeople would not permit her to get water elsewhere.

10. When Prudence continued undaunted, the Connecticut legislature passed its 1833 "Black Law" (repealed in 1838), making it illegal to run a school teaching African American students from a state other than Connecticut.

11. Prudence was arrested and jailed.

- Her first trial ended in a hung jury; the second trial resulted in her conviction, which was overturned by a higher court.

12. On the night of September 9, 1834, an angry mob broke most of the school's windows and smashed furniture.

- Fearing for her students' safety, Crandall finally closed the school.

13. The next year, Prudence married Calvin Philleo, a Baptist Minister and the couple settled in Illinois, where Prudence ran another school.

- Following her husband's death in 1874, she moved to Elk Falls, Kansas to live with her brother.

14. In 1886, prompted by a petition signed by over 100 repentant Canterbury citizens, in an effort led by Mark Twain, the Connecticut State Legislature awarded her a pension.

15. Prudence Crandall died in 1890, and in 1995, the Connecticut State Legislature recognized her as the official State Heroine.

- Her house in Canterbury – the site of her school – is now a State Museum and a National Historic Landmark.

16. I have only touched on the life and struggles of Prudence Crandall; you can read more about her on Wikipedia and elsewhere.

17. Truly, Prudence Crandall was a woman who reached out to those who were different and made a difference.

Conclusion

WHO is the different one in your life and HOW do you respond to them?

How do we react in this time of UNWELCOMING and FEAR of the Other; where anything different is regarded with suspicion and anxiety; where some want to SCORN the DIFFERENT and shun anyone or anything not like me?

Now, once again, we will be welcoming REFUGEES from a foreign land, how will they be greeted – with fear or open arms?

At a time when many around us are responding with FEAR of the OTHER, we need to remember Jesus reaching to this woman who couldn't be more different – who his society thought was little better than a dog.

Yet, Jesus treated her as any other child of God – healing her daughter and opening the possibility of a new relationship with God to her.

We need to remember Prudence Crandall who reached out to those who were different – that they might receive an education – and do the same.

We are called to be DOERS of the Word – to be in there making a difference not just being a mere spectator.

We are called to be IN the world making a difference – putting our faith into Action.

WHO is the different one and HOW do you respond to them?

Let Us Pray

Grant. Almighty God, that we may hear your Word with our outward ears, and through your grace, graft it inwardly in our hearts, that we may be doers of your Word and not hearers only, that your redeeming love may show forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. AMEN (GBL – adapted)

Read more at [National Women's History Museum](#).

(MLA - Michals, Debra. "Prudence Crandall." *National Women's History Museum*. National Women's History Museum, 2015. Date accessed.

Chicago - Michals, Debra. "Prudence Crandall." *National Women's History Museum*. 2015. www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/prudence-crandall.0