



Celebrate

Sunday, September 8, 2024
16th Sunday after Pentecost

James tells us to stop showing favoritism in the assembly, treating the rich visitor with more honor than the poor one. Jesus himself seems to show partiality in his first response to the Syrophenician woman in today's gospel. Was he testing her faith in saying Gentiles don't deserve the goods meant for God's children? Or was he speaking out of his human worldview, but transcended those limits when she took him by surprise with her reply? Either way, the story tells us that God shows no partiality. Everyone who brings a need to Jesus is received with equal honor as a child and heir.

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform sickness into health and death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, and make us a people ready to proclaim your promises to the whole world, through Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

Isaiah 35:4-7a

These verses are a word of hope to the exiles in Babylon. Isaiah 34 portrays God's vengeance on Edom, Israel's age-old enemy, which makes the path from Babylon to Zion safe for the exiles' return. The desert itself will flow with water to give drink to the returning exiles.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be
opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless
sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the
wilderness,

and streams in the desert;

⁷the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of
water.

Second Reading

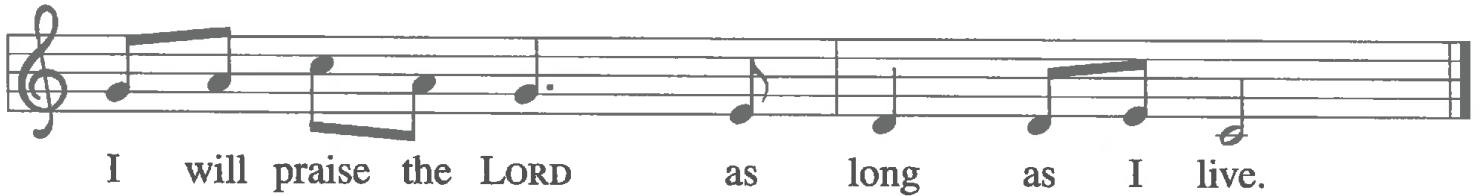
James 2:1-10 [11-13] 14-17

Faithful Christians do not show partiality to the rich and powerful of the world, especially at the expense of the poor and weak. Likewise, faith does not pay mere lip service to God's will. Instead, a living Christian faith expresses itself in acts of compassion and mercy for those in need.

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? ²For 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, ³and 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, “Stand there,”

continued



Hal-¹ lelujah!

Praise the LORD,¹ O my soul!

²I will praise the LORD as long¹ as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I¹ have my being.

³Put not your¹ trust in rulers,

in mortals in whom there¹ is no help.

⁴When they breathe their last, they re-¹ turn to earth,

and in that day¹ their thoughts perish. **R**

⁵Happy are they who have the God of Jacob¹ for their help,

whose hope is in the¹ LORD their God;

⁶who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that¹ is in them;

who keeps promis-¹ es forever;

⁷who gives justice to those who are oppressed,

and food to¹ those who hunger.

The LORD sets the¹ captive free.

⁸The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;

the LORD lifts up those who¹ are bowed down;

the LORD¹ loves the righteous. **R**

⁹The LORD cares¹ for the stranger;

the LORD sustains the orphan and widow,

but frustrates the way¹ of the wicked.

¹⁰The LORD shall¹ reign forever,

your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. ¹ Hallelujah! **R**

or, “Sit at my feet,” ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? ⁷Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

⁸You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ⁹But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for

all of it. [¹¹For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.]

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and 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 is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Gospel

Mark 7:24-37

In Mark's gospel, encounters with women usually signify turning points in Jesus' ministry. Here, a conversation with a Syrophenician woman marks the beginning of his mission to the Gentiles.

[Jesus] set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, ²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁸ But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.” ²⁹ Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” ³⁰ So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Drawn together in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray with confidence for the church, God's good creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Awaken in our communities of faith a spirit of radical hospitality. Encourage our churches to celebrate and embrace people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and abilities. Deepen our commitment to ecumenical and interreligious partnerships (*local partners may be named*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Bring forth water to nourish plants and animals in places suffering from drought. Renew our commitments to protect rivers, lakes, and streams, and make us good stewards of water in our homes and communities. Preserve wetland habitats and the creatures that make their homes there. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Inspire leaders of cities, nations, and tribes to lead with wisdom and humility. Bring peace among peoples in conflict (*especially*) and strengthen global

commitments to nonviolent solutions. Guide all who seek refuge from war to a safe haven. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Comfort all who live with chronic illness. Surround them in your tender embrace and sustain all who provide ongoing care and support. Bring hope and healing to people struggling with addiction and nourish the spirits of all who are in recovery. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Nurture in all people the gift of your creating Spirit. Inspire artists and musicians, woodworkers and quilters, poets and dancers. Revive those whose artistic wells have run dry and enliven all who doubt their creative talents. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give you thanks for all who have died and now find their rest in you. May their faithful witness guide us in our daily life with you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We entrust these and all our prayers to you, holy God, in the name of your beloved child, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Peter Claver, priest, missionary to Colombia, 1654) Isaiah 38:10-20. **Tuesday** Hebrews 12:3-13. **Wednesday** Matthew 17:14-21. **Thursday** Psalm 116:1-9. **Friday** (commemoration of John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, 407) James 2:17-26. **Saturday** (Holy Cross Day) John 3:13-17. **17th Sunday after Pentecost** Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 116:1-9; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38.

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