

September 5th, 2021 – Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Introduction to the Day

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.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose teaching is life,
whose presence is sure,
and whose love is endless.

Amen.

Let us confess our sins to the one who welcomes us
with an open heart.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God our comforter:

like lost sheep, we have gone astray.

We gaze upon abundance and see scarcity.

**We turn our faces away from injustice and
oppression.**

We exploit the earth with our apathy and greed.

Free us from our sin, gracious God.

Listen when we call out to you for help.

**Lead us by your love to love our neighbors as
ourselves.**

Amen.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

By the gift of grace in † Christ Jesus, God makes
you righteous.

Receive with glad hearts the forgiveness of all your
sins.

Amen.

Gathering Song

“Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”

#836 vs. 1,3

Prayer of the Day

O God our strength, without you we are weak and wayward creatures. Protect us from all dangers that attack us from the outside, and cleanse us from all evil that arises from within ourselves, that we may be preserved through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

James 2:1-17

¹My 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,” 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.

Children’s Message

Gospel – Mark 7:24-37

²⁴[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,²⁵but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. ²⁶Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷He 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.” ²⁸But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” ²⁹Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” ³⁰So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

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

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

Years ago there was a story that made its way around the internet of a man who was a newly called pastor of a very large congregation. Before his first Sunday he grew out his beard and hair as much as he could, roughed himself up, and entered the building on his first Sunday appearing as a homeless man. He wanted to see how his new congregation would treat someone that appeared that way on a Sunday morning.

Very few people, members of this congregation, actually came up to him and greeted him.

Now, as it turns out this story may very well have been made up, and as it turns out is actually a variation of a study that was done at a seminary years ago. Students in a particular seminary class were given urgent tasks that they needed to complete. En route to completing these tasks were folks planted as homeless people to see if the busy seminary students would take the time out of their urgent tasks to tend to the needs of their sibling in Christ. The results were then later analyzed.

At Bible Camp there was a skit that began with God making a phone call to someone at their home. In the conversation God mentions that they are coming over for dinner. The phone call ends and the owner of the home frantically plans a meal and works on cleaning the house to have it “God ready.” In the process multiple visitors stop by the home with needs of their own. Some are hungry. Some tired. Some without money. Whatever it may be. Each time the owner of the home says they have a “very important guest coming for dinner” and they aren’t able to help.

Time passes and the phone rings again. Again, it is God on the line. The homeowner is distraught as they have prepared their home and a beautiful meal, yet God never showed up. God reminds the person that they indeed did show up. As a hungry person. As a tired traveler. As someone without money.

Again. A lesson in Christlike compassion.

Yet another Bible Camp skit. This time there is a great flood. As flood waters rise “helpers” stop by a person home to help them out. First walking to their front door offering to give them a ride to safety. Then as the waters rise they come by in a canoe. Later, as the homeowner is sitting on the roof of the house help comes by helicopter. Each time the person responds that they have prayed and that God will help them.

Eventually the person doesn't make it out of the flood and when they meet God they ask where the help was. God reminds them that many times people came by to help, and each time the person said no.

This time a lesson in receiving Christlike compassion.

Why do I share these skits/stories? Because that is what it means to be a part of the Body of Christ.

I once saw the question posed, “If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would you be convicted?”

The immediate response, I imagine, for many of us is an obvious yes. And I'm with you.

But would we be convicted?

We are introduced in our Gospel text to what the Body of Christ looks like. In this Gospel text, our ideal Body of Christ is challenged.

Jesus and his disciples have sought an escape. They have gone to the region of Tyre hoping that no one would know he was there.

A woman from the Gentile (non-Jewish) region of Syria and Phoenicia comes to Jesus and his disciples. Her daughter has an unclean spirit, is possessed by a demon, and she needs help. Initially, perhaps knowing the cultural boundaries in place, Jesus tells her to get away, even comparing her to a scavenging dog.

But, SHE reminds HIM that even the dogs get to eat. Her faith in this promise makes her daughter well, and Jesus sends her on her way.

From there he goes on. Again, seeking a bit of a getaway. This time he is confronted by a crowd who has brought to him a deaf man with a speech impediment. Jesus takes the man aside, puts his fingers in his ears and touches his tongue, then, looking up to heaven he says, “be opened.” And the man is healed.

You see, Jesus never set out to have either of these experiences. First he was looking for a getaway, and was confronted by a desperate mother wanting her daughter to be made well. Seeing that he was discovered in that part of his travels, he set out for a different place, only to have a crowd bring him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment.

He didn't seek out either of these experiences.

Instead, they sought him.

That is the Body of Christ. The call to open and expand the Body of Christ doesn't come when we most expect it. Rather, that call confronts us perhaps when we want it the least.

The beauty of this call to build up the Body of Christ is that it is ever-changing. Throughout generations there have been ideas (social constructs) of what the Body of Christ may look like, and throughout generations God has turned those constructs upside down. You see, it isn't up to us, as much as we want it to be, just as it turns out in these stories it wasn't so much up to Jesus, who is and who isn't a part of the Body of Christ. Jesus ministry in these stories is transformed. Being confronted by the woman of a Gentile region changes him. Being told that “even I deserve the crumbs” changes how Jesus sees others. And it is for the better.

Siblings in Christ we are called to examine how it is that we, personally and communally, view this body. We have our ideas of what this Body looks like, but what would happen if a homeless person, or simply a visitor, came into our midst. What would be our response? If we were the person in the skit readying our home for God coming to dinner, what would we do with the visitors?

On the flipside. If we were the people coming to dinner, the people seeking help in the flood, the woman wanting her daughter healed demanding even the children and dogs get crumbs, or the deaf man hearing the words, "be opened."

The Body of Christ and being a part of it goes both ways.

So, if you were put on trial for being a Christian, would you be convicted?

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

Song of the Day

"Healer of Our Every Ill"

#612 vs. 1,3,4

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Holy One, you bring your people together in worship. Enliven your church. Guide all evangelists, preachers, prophets, and missionaries who seek to share your love through word and deed. You support the work of your disciples. Continue to nurture the leadership and ministries of this congregation. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You provide water for thirsty ground and sunshine to feed hungry plants. Bless all who advocate for healthy forests, unpolluted air, and clean waterways. Inspire all people to show care for the world you have made. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You show no partiality. Increase justice in all nations. Encourage leaders and governments to work with one another for the good of our common world. Unite us in seeking the health, safety, and dignity of all. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You accompany those who are most in need. Shelter all fleeing violence or persecution, protect any who are in danger, and sustain them through uncertain and unstable times. Our needs, wants, and desires are many. We pray especially for Peyton, Kathy Smith, Matt Miller, Bill and Betty Davey, Bob Kries, Jim and Sandy Nelson, Joe Christensen, Marilee Julson, Bill and Bonnie Kuehn, Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You embrace all who have died in the faith and brought them into your glorious presence. We thank you for their example and rejoice in their lives. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

God of abundance,
you cause streams to break forth in the desert
and manna to rain from the heavens.

Accept the gifts you have first given us.

Unite them with the offering of our lives
to nourish the world you love so dearly;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it for all to drink saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. So often as you do this, remember me.”

Once you’ve taken the elements say, “Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord’s Prayer

Sending Song

“We Are Called”

#720 vs 1,3

Blessing

People of God,
you are Christ’s body,
bringing new life to a suffering world.

The holy Trinity, † one God,
bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

Thanks be to God.

Announcements

“Calling all Singers”

We will have a choir anthem on September 12. All are welcome to sing. We will meet at 8 that morning before service starts. The song selection will be "River in Judea" and "God be with You til We meet Again". See you all then!

Blessing of the Backpacks

Bring your backpacks (briefcases, or whatever gets you to your "desk") on **Sept. 12** for a special blessing to get this academic year off to a great start.

Bibles will also be handed out to our Kindergartners, 3rd graders and 6th graders.

Updated numbers from We Care Eau Claire

We just wanted to let you know the final report from the backpack event in August.

*21 churches participated in the event

*783 students served (26 from Roosevelt) 269 families

Thank you again to all who supported this event.

Shepherd's Closet will be collecting cloth items for their Nov. 11 fundraiser. Bring items in white or black bags, marked SAVERS, and leave them in the Shepherd's Closet bin.

Lutheran Disaster Response

The impact of Ida is yet to be fully assessed, but with a hurricane of this scale, rebuilding will be costly and take years. With extensive experience in accompanying communities throughout the relief and long-term recovery phases, Lutheran Disaster Response is working with local ELCA synods and Lutheran social service organizations to coordinate a response to Hurricane Ida. Immediate needs will include food, basic necessities and temporary housing. Long after the headlines change, Lutheran Disaster Response will continue to accompany communities on the journey of rebuilding their homes and lives.

Your gifts will support survivors of Hurricane Ida. Gifts to "U.S. Hurricanes" will be used in full (100%) to assist those affected by hurricanes until the response is complete.

Give online (elca.org), send checks or money orders to: **Lutheran Disaster Response, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009**, write "Hurricane Ida" on your check memo line, or give by phone at **800-638-3522**.