**Sunday, September 9, 2018
16th Sunday after Pentecost**

### Introduction

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 Syrophoenician 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 her or his 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.**

### Readings and Psalm

[**Isaiah 35:4-7a**](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources/2018-9-9/0)

Like streams in the desert, God comes with healing

[**Psalm 146**](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources/2018-9-9/0)

I will praise the Lord as long as I live. (Ps. 146:2)

[**James 2:1-10 [11-13] 14-17**](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources/2018-9-9/0)

Faith without works is dead

[**Mark 7:24-37**](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources/2018-9-9/0)

Christ healing a little girl and a deaf man

### First Reading: Isaiah 35:4-7a

These verses are a word of hope to the exiles in Babylon. Chapter 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.

 4Say 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;
 7athe burning sand shall become a pool,
  and the thirsty ground springs of water.

### Psalm: Psalm 146

*I will praise the Lord as long as I live.*(Ps. 146:2)

 1Hal- | lelujah!
  Praise the Lord, | O my soul!
 2**I will praise the Lord as long | as I live;**
  **I will sing praises to my God while I | have my being.**
 3Put not your | trust in rulers,
  in mortals in whom there | is no help.
 4**When they breathe their last, they re- | turn to earth,**
  **and in that day | their thoughts perish. R**
 5Happy are they who have the God of Jacob | for their help,
  whose hope is in the | Lord their God;
 6**who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that | is in them;**
  **who keeps promis- | es forever;**
 7who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to | those who hunger.
  The Lord sets the | captive free.
 8**The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who | are bowed down;**
  **the Lord| loves the righteous. R**
 9The Lord cares | for the stranger;
  the Lord sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way | of the wicked.
 10**The Lord shall | reign forever,**
  **your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. | Hallelujah! R**

### 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.

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.

### Gospel: Mark 7:24-37

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

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 Syrophoenician 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.”

### Prayers of Intercession

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

Freed by God in Christ to live and love and serve, we pray for the church, those in need, and all of God’s beloved creation.

*A brief silence.*

Gracious God, you call your church to proclaim the love of Christ to a needy world. Embolden us to be your risen body by welcoming strangers and serving our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Creative God, small sprouts and tall trees proclaim your majesty. Give us clear eyes to see nature’s beauty and wise minds to protect our home, this earth, from misuse and harm. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Sovereign God, you draw order from chaos. Watch over the nations of the world. Bless citizens and leaders who strive toward the beloved community for which you long. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Loving God, you give us all that we need. When your children suffer from hunger, poverty, loneliness, persecution, injury, or illness, send generous helpers and companions. We pray especially for . . . . Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Welcoming God, you set a table for us. Embolden this congregation to seek new ways of inviting others to the feast of all creation. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

You bless us with throngs of saints who witness to your compassion. With gratitude, we recall the lives and deeds of those who proclaim lovingkindness to a needy world (including Peter Claver, priest and missionary). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Into your wide embrace, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your boundless mercy through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

**Amen.**