



Whoever welcomes
one such child
in my name
welcomes
me
MARK 9:37

Sunday, September 19, 2021

17th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B

Introduction

Today we hear James warn against selfish ambition, while the disciples quarrel over which one of them is the greatest. Jesus tells them the way to be great is to serve. Then, to make it concrete, he puts in front of them a flesh-and-blood child. We are called to welcome the children God puts in front of us, to make room for them in daily interaction, and to give them a place of honor in the assembly.

GATHERING

WELCOME

This is the day the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.

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.

Reading: James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a

The wisdom God gives unites our hearts and minds. Instead of living to satisfy our own wants and desires, we manifest this wisdom in peace, gentleness, mercy, and impartiality toward others.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.^{4:}

¹Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ^{8a}Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Word of God. Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

Jesus' teaching and action in this text are directed to the church whenever it is seduced by the world's definition of greatness: prestige, power, influence, and money. The antidote to such a concern for greatness is servanthood.

³⁰[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." ³²But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" ³⁴But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

The Greatest

In today's gospel from Mark, the disciples have just witnessed Jesus' transfiguration atop the high mountain. Riding high on this experience, they are now traveling with him through the countryside, processing what they have seen, contrasting it with the story of crucifixion and death Jesus keeps hinting at. They begin to argue about which of them is the greatest—who will be given the highest honors for hanging out with Jesus? But Jesus stops them in their tracks. It isn't about the highest honors, or about who shines most brightly: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

Jesus' words to the disciples and to us are a reminder that God flips upside-down the way the world judges greatness. As Christians, most of us know this almost instinctively. We talk about avoiding "works righteousness" and rejecting the need to earn our salvation or prove our faith. And yet, even within the "servant

of all” framework, we too often compete with one another to be the greatest servant. We hold ourselves up as examples of charity and justice, patting ourselves on the back for our works of service, hoping that the world—and God—will be impressed. Even when we know that this isn’t how God works, we still get sucked into the ways of the world.

But Jesus’ statement to the disciples is not just about them: it is also about himself. It is a reminder that Jesus’ greatness is precisely because on the cross, he has become “last of all and servant of all.” Our own efforts at service and humility will always pale in comparison to the Son of God. To be sure, we are called to love and serve our neighbors; but we are called to trust Jesus, “last of all and servant of all,” for our salvation. This is good news, for now our competitions and attempts to impress are no more. We simply receive from the Lord and pass it along.

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

A brief silence.

God of community, we pray for the church around the world. Unite us in our love for you. Help us overcome our divisions, that we are encouraged to work together for your sake. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God of creation, we pray for this hurting earth. Awaken in us a new desire to care for this world and empower us to support agencies, organizations, and individual efforts to heal our environment. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God of cooperation, we pray for nations of the world embroiled in conflict (*especially*). Inspire leaders to listen to each other and work towards peaceful solutions to disagreements. Protect the vulnerable, especially children, who cannot find safety in their home or country. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God of comfort, we pray for all who live with mental or physical illness. Help them find appropriate care. Bring healing and wholeness when the path forward seems bleak. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God of compassion, we pray for the young people of this congregation. Renew in us your call to welcome the children in our midst. As they grow, strengthen their faith and our commitment to them. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Accept our thanksgiving for the people you surround us with, especially for those who celebrate their lives and birth this week:

9/19 – Kristi Tostenrud

9/22 – Gary Rick

9/23 – Beth Pautsch

enrich them with a sense of joy and grace for yet another year. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Save us from ourselves, from racism in all its hidden forms, from hollow words without actions, forgive us, renew us, call us to action. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

For those fighting cancer and other serious illnesses, grant strength and grace. We pray for doctors, nurses, technicians, researchers and all who work toward treatments and cures. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

For police officers and firefighters, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

For all those who are dealing with the COVID-19 coronavirus around the world: those who are infected, those caring for them, those trying to mitigate and manage the epidemic. Thankful for the vaccine, we ask your help in its distribution and continued production throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God of consolation, we give you thanks for our loved ones who have died and pray for all who grieve today (*especially*). Shine your grace on all your saints. 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

.Thank you for your support of our ministry.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: Words of Institution

Grace at the table: The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen

BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you,
may the Lord smile upon you and be gracious to you,
may the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.
Thanks be to God.

ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR THE DAY

Jeremiah 11:18-20

Wisdom 1:16-2:1, 12-22 (alternate)

Psalm 54

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS FOR

September 26, 2021 – 18th Sunday after Pentecost

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29

The LORD's spirit comes upon seventy elders

Psalm 19:7-14

The commandment of the LORD gives light to the eyes. (Ps. 10-8)

James 5:13-20

Prayer and anointing in the community

Mark 9:38-50

Warnings to those who obstruct faith

Upcoming Commemorations

Nelson Wesley Trout, bishop, died 1996 (TFF)

Monday, September 20, 2021

A native of Ohio, Trout served parishes in several parts of the United States before being elected bishop of the South Pacific District of the American Lutheran Church, the first African American Lutheran to serve in such a capacity.

Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Matthew (or Levi) was a tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government. Tax collectors were frequently despised for dishonesty and for assisting the occupiers. Jesus nevertheless showed love for them and chose Matthew to be a disciple.

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