



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 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

In the name of the Father, and of the **+** Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone.

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and one another.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,

so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

In the name of **+** Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen**

Opening Hymn ELW # 858/LBW # 543 *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 146

¹Hallelujah! 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 return to earth,
and in that day their thoughts perish.**

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 promises 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.**

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!**

Second Reading: James 2:1-17

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.

Read the complete text [here](#).

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.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

A question: ¹My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?

James may as well have been looking at us - our country and our church today when this statement was written. Do we really believe in our Glorious Lord Jesus Christ? If you read or listen to the news today, it would be pretty obvious that we do not. We seem to live in a time when putting ourselves, our families, our country, our wealth, our jobs, our companies and corporations first. We put just about anything else above hearing and obeying God. Doing for ourselves and letting others fend for themselves is what everyone seems to think is the right thing to do. We don't seem to care for the widows or orphans James mentioned last week. We don't seem to care much about the poor, the hungry, the sick, those in prison, or those in any other kind of distress.

Instead, we elect politicians who put more money in our pockets and let those on food stamps go hungry. We vote against insurance programs that will help everyone simply because we might have to pay a little more. We give hundreds, thousands, even millions of dollars to politicians in the hopes that we might get some things done that will help our bottom line, but when it comes time to give to the poor, we are reluctant to even share our pocket change.

Now this may seem like a bit of a pointed jab at everyone, but the bottom line is this: caring for the least of these among us is what we are called to do – at all cost, without consideration of ourselves. That is the gospel. It is not me as the preacher telling you the way I want you to do things; It is the preacher telling you what Jesus said.

Don't get me wrong – I struggle with this as much as you do. Once upon a time, the very idea of giving 10 percent of my income to the church was a scary thought, and I was not sure I could or should do it. I was not sure I trusted the church with the money. And I sure did not believe that I should give to the church instead of some other places where I donated money. But the more I studied scripture, the more I studied the words of Jesus, the more I studied the commandments God gave to his people, the more sure I have become that 10 percent is not enough. I am called to do even more than that. I am called to give as much as I can, and then some. I am called to do all I can for the poor, the hungry, the orphan, and the widow. There is no limit to what I am called to do. The only limit is my own fear – the fear of not having enough for myself. The fear that I might give away something that I might need. The fear that what I give might be misused.

Loving my neighbor is a big deal. And today, it is a very dividing topic. There is even a meme going around on Facebook that says, “American Christianity has become so misguided that saying, ‘Jesus loves immigrants and refugees’ is interpreted as partisan rhetoric rather than divine truth.” And yet, today in our Gospel text, we have Jesus with foreigner, an enemy of Israel.

The Syrophenician woman is the first non-Jew we hear of Jesus encountering in Mark's Gospel. Even as Jesus argues with the Gentile woman, we hear him finally give in – in response to the woman's faith and insistence that her case be heard – even though she is not Jewish. Jesus heals her daughter, accepting her. Then – Jesus heals the man who is deaf and cannot speak, not because of his faith, but because of the faith of his friends.

If you search for all the healing stories in scripture, you will notice that in none of these stories the recipient is required to be of a specific faith, or a specific nationality, or a specific skin color, or have the right kind of papers, or anything else. Those who are in need are healed. God is given the glory. Every time. Whether it is Jesus, or Peter, or Paul, or any of the Old Testament prophets, they are all healed.

James has it right that we want to keep the law, but we each want to interpret the law in our own way. We want to keep the law so that it benefits us, not the poor, or the stranger. Jesus tells us that the two greatest commandments are these – love God, and love neighbor. All other commandments and laws come from these.

As we come together to do projects that help others, as we are asked to give to Lutheran Disaster response for storms and fires and earthquakes which have already happened, or storms about to come upon us, remember the words and actions of Jesus, of the disciples, of the prophets – love God, love neighbor. Care for the widow and orphan, feed the hungry, care for the poor and the sick and the lonely. Care for all of God's children, as if they lived right next door, or even under your very own roof. For Jesus calls us, strengthens us through the Word and the Sacraments, and sends us out, as we hear in the hymn *There is a Balm in Gilead*, to “tell the love of Jesus, who died to save us all.”

Amen.

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**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 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.

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. 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. Especially as we celebrate Labor Day, 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. Bring healing to the sick and comfort to those who grieve, especially those we name now.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You support the work of your disciples. Continue to nurture the leadership and ministries of the church. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

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.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.

Closing Hymn ELW # 708/WOV # 765 *Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love*

Listen and sing along [here](#)..

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.