



### 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.*

### 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 # 389/LBW # 363    *Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing***

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

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, our teacher and guide, you draw us to yourself and welcome us as beloved children. Help us to lay aside all envy and selfish ambition, that we may walk in your ways of wisdom and understanding as servants of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-20**

*Today's reading tells of the suffering of the prophet Jeremiah, who announced God's word to Judah but was met with intense opposition and persecution. Jeremiah continues to trust in God in the midst of his suffering.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

**Psalm: Psalm 54**

- <sup>1</sup>Save me, O God, by your name;  
in your might, defend my cause.
- <sup>2</sup>**Hear my prayer, O God;**  
**give ear to the words of my mouth.**
- <sup>3</sup>For strangers have risen up against me,  
and the ruthless have sought my life,  
those who have no regard for God.
- <sup>4</sup>**Behold, God is my helper;**  
**it is the Lord who sustains my life.**
- <sup>5</sup>Render evil to those who spy on me;  
in your faithfulness, destroy them.
- <sup>6</sup>**I will offer you a freewill sacrifice**  
**and praise your name, O LORD, for it is good.**
- <sup>7</sup>For you have rescued me from every trouble,  
and my eye looks down on my enemies.

**Second 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.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## **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.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## **Reflection on the Text**

In our Gospel text last week, Jesus and the disciples are on the road, and he asks his disciples the question – Who do people say that I am? I am sure you all remember the story – some say he is Elijah, some John the Baptist, and so on – but Peter – the who usually has his foot in his mouth – Peter says, “You are the Christ – the Messiah.” And then Jesus tells them for the first time what it means to be the Messiah – that he must suffer and die, which of course Peter did not like very much. That text ends with Jesus calling his followers to deny themselves, take up their crosses and to follow him.

In our text today, Jesus and the disciples are again on the road, and Jesus is teaching them – telling them for the second time how he must suffer and die. The disciples still don't get it. They all knew about the coming messiah – the chosen one of God – who was to come as a warrior king like David and conquer all their enemies – or so they thought. They expected a king, just not one who was going to the cross to reconcile them with God, rather than rise up and destroy the Roman army. They expected a leader, but not one who led by serving, not one who taught by healing, not one who had compassion for everyone in need – even the dying, and the dead.

After hearing them argue, Jesus tries to explain to them that whoever wants to be first among them must be last. They must learn to serve one another, and all those they meet. Greatness is not measured in accomplishments or wealth; battles won, or companies acquired by hostile takeovers; it is not measured by what we have or how we got it, but by how we have served the least of these.

Serving is not something we hear enough about today. Instead, we hear of homeless being arrested just for being homeless; of businesses filing lawsuits so that they can refuse to serve some portion of the population just because they disagree with them; we hear of religion being used as an excuse NOT to serve someone, rather than a reason TO serve someone; we hear lawmakers pointing fingers at each other, and at the population they serve because there is an expectation that children should not go to school hungry or suffer from lack of basic medical care but no one wants to be responsible. No one thinks it is their job to care for one another. We even hear of church members and pastors being arrested for feeding the homeless.

As an example, Jesus picks up a child – the very least of these in the first century, and says, if you want to be his disciple, then welcome the children – the least of these in our population – care for them, serve them, let no harm come to them. If your heart and mind are set on Jesus, then this is how you live. This is how you set your priorities. We are called to care for all of those with less than we have, all who are in need, and NOT to prioritize based on wealth or status.

This may sound harsh. We might all think this is too difficult, too hard to do, maybe even beyond our means, but you are forgetting who you are. You are a child of God, and Jesus calls us, equips us, feeds us, forgives us, and sends us out to serve him, and others in his name. We are called to walk with Jesus, not with those in society who think power equals greatness. We are called to humbly walk with the least, not the greatest.

When we gather at the table, we receive forgiveness of our sins. We are given assurance of who and whose we are. Strengthened with these gifts of grace, we are then sent out into the world to serve, to welcome the children, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, visit the sick, and to care for the least of these – our brothers and sisters – all children of our heavenly Father. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day ELW # 781/WOV # 464      *Children of the Heavenly Father***

*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.*

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. 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, especially those we name now. 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.**

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 # 796/WOV # 507      *How Firm a Foundation***

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

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.