



THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 5, 2021

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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 her or his need to Jesus is received with equal honor as a child and heir.

✠ GATHERING ✠

OPENING HYMN	<i>Praise to the Lord, the Almighty</i>	#543 (grn)
CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS		on screen
GREETING		on screen
HYMN OF PRAISE		

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P. Almighty and eternal God, You know our problems and our weaknesses better than we ourselves. In Your love and by Your power help us in our confusion and, in spite of our weakness, make us firm in faith; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. Amen.

✠ WORD ✠

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.

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

L. The Word of the Lord. C. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 146

I will praise the LORD as long as I live

Hallelujah!

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, nor in any child of earth,
for there is no help in them.

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 His promise forever;**

⁷Who gives justice to those who are oppressed,
and food to those who hunger.

⁸**The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind;
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;**

⁹the LORD loves the righteous; the LORD cares for the stranger;
He 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.

My 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.

L. The Word of the Lord. C. Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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HOLY GOSPEL: St. 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.

C. Glory to You, O Lord.

[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.”³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.³⁶ Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more He ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

P. The Gospel of the Lord. C. Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY *Word of God, Come Down on Earth* #716 (blu)

THE APOSTLES’ CREED page 85

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P. ... Lord, in Your mercy,
C. hear our prayer.

SHARING THE PEACE OF THE LORD

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERING /OFFERTORY *Let the vineyards...* page 86

OFFERTORY PRAYER page 87

✠ MEAL ✠

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING page 88

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P. Holy God, our Bread of Life ... bread for the world.
C. Amen.

P. In the night in ... the everlasting feast.
C. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P. By Your Spirit ... both now and forever.
C. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER page 91

DISTRIBUTION

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING page 92

POST-COMMUNION SONG *Thank the Lord* page 92

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

P. Blessed are You . . . to work in Jesus’ name.
C. Amen.



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Wrestling with God

At first glance, the gospel this week rankles a bit. What is Jesus doing to this poor woman in His interaction with her? Is He insulting her, calling her and her daughter “dogs”? Is He holding out the people of Israel as more deserving of His attention? Is He making her “earn” her daughter’s healing and salvation? Certainly not. The scriptures clearly testify that Jesus is without sin (Hebrews 4:15). But scripture also testifies to several instances when individuals wrestle with God, the promises God gives, and the faith needed to trust them. Jacob (Genesis 32:22-32), Job, Mary and Martha (John 11:1-44), and Peter (Acts 10:9-23) are but a few examples of individuals in the Bible who tussle with God and God’s call on their lives. This week’s passage is similar. Jesus does not mock the Syrophenician woman; rather, He engages her. He pushes back against her initial request and draws out of her an even stronger confession of faith. She is no longer just a desperate mother hoping against hope, but a woman of faith who knows deep in her soul that all people—even Gentiles, even her daughter, even she herself—are beloved and fed by God.

We too can have experiences like this woman, and the others throughout scripture, did. We live through events or seasons that force us to confront the God who loves us, who has created and redeemed us. At times you may have found yourself wrestling with God, demanding blessings, challenging truth, promising devotion, fighting for every last ounce of faith to get you through. These situations are not always immediately pleasant. But take heart—the Holy Spirit promises to bring you through to the other side, faith intact and blessings bestowed. May you be “astounded beyond measure” (Mark 7:37) at the works of the Lord.

Upcoming Commemorations

September 9, 2021 Peter Claver, priest, missionary to Colombia, died 1654

Born into Spanish nobility, Claver became a Jesuit missionary, and served in present-day Colombia. His ministry was focused on the slaves that arrived there. He gave them food and medicine, learned their dialects, and taught them Christianity.

Acknowledgements

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