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Morning Worship

September 2021

No limits to God's love

OPENING PRAYER:

**Lord God, we come to you in many different ways.
No matter how we are feeling,
we come to meet you, expectant and hopeful.
Whether we are one or many,
and whatever our station in life,
you welcome us, arms wide open.
We come into your presence to worship you, Lord God of all.
Amen.**

READING: James 2.1-10 [11-13] 14-17 (New International Version)

2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?⁶ But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of

breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

READING: Mark 7.24-end (New International Version)

²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” ²⁸ “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” ²⁹ Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” ³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

³¹ Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “*Ephphatha!*” (which means “Be opened!”). ³⁵ At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

REFLECTION

The two readings remind us that people are often judged by their appearance or their background. Appearance, uniforms and clothes often convey people's character. How people 'fit in' or are accepted is often determined by their appearance.

James (in verse 1) points out clearly about avoiding 'favouritism' and the implications if appearance influences the way in which we relate to those who approach, or indeed need, the church.

Mark's story tells of two people who not only felt that they weren't welcome – it was a lived reality. Neither of them was welcome in Israel because they were not Jewish. The woman was a Gentile – a non-Jew. That was what defined her and made her not welcome. A Gentile and a woman – Jesus should not have spoken to her. But he did.

And the man who was deaf was also not a Jew – he came from Decapolis. And Jesus speaks to him too, and he too is healed. The message from Mark is clear – God's kingdom will come to the whole world, not just the Jews. Religious and cultural boundaries are no barrier to God's kingdom.

Who you are does not matter. Christ is available to all.

PRAYERS:

We pray for people who are living in desperate situations and for those who are helping them as they find comfort and safety.

We pray that all people may find acceptance and fulfilment in whatever circumstance.

We celebrate and give thanks for the achievement of the Paralympics.

We pray for our schools, teachers, young people and parents as they return to the new school year.

LORDS PRAYER:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.

Now and for ever. Amen

CLOSING PRAYER:

Welcoming God, as we journey on our lives this week:

**Teach us to be open to others,
to offer welcome, and practise inclusion.**

Sustain us with your presence.

Nourish us with your word,

Strengthen us in your service

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

THE GRACE:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

And the love of God,

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore.

Amen.