



Celebrate

Sunday, September 22, 2024
18th Sunday after Pentecost

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.

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.

It was the LORD who made it known
to me, and I knew;
then you showed me their evil
deeds.

¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.
And I did not know it was
against me
that they devised schemes, saying,
"Let us destroy the tree with its
fruit,

let us cut him off from the land
of the living,
so that his name will no longer
be remembered!"

²⁰But you, O LORD of hosts, who
judge righteously,
who try the heart and the mind,
let me see your retribution upon
them,
for to you I have committed my
cause.

or Wisdom 1:16—2:1, 12-22 [not printed]

Dating from shortly before the time of Christ, the Wisdom of Solomon is a piece of Jewish wisdom literature. This reading portrays the ungodly planning the downfall of the righteous person. The ungodly are allied with death, and they do not know that God gives eternal life to the righteous.

Psalm

Psalm 54; refrain, Ps. 54:4

God is my help - er; it is the
Lord who sus - tains my life.

Save me, O God, ¹ by your name;
in your might, de- ¹ fend my cause.

² **Hear my ¹ prayer, O God;**
give ear to the words ¹ of my mouth.

³ For strangers have risen up against me,
and the ruthless have ¹ sought my life,
those who have no re- ¹ gard for God.

⁴ **Behold, God ¹ is my helper;**
it is the Lord who sus- ¹ tains my life. **R**

⁵ Render evil to those who ¹ spy on me;
in your faithful- ¹ ness, destroy them.

⁶ **I will offer you a ¹ freewill sacrifice**
and praise your name, O LORD, for ¹ it is good.

⁷ For you have rescued me from ¹ every trouble,
and my eye looks down ¹ on my enemies. **R**

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.

Who 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.

^{4:1}Those 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. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

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.

[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; ³¹for 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."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Drawn together in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray with confidence for the church, God's good creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Loving God, you welcome all at your table of grace. Instill in your church a spirit of humility and curiosity, that we embrace all who seek you. We pray especially for ministries of hospitality and faith formation (*specific ministries may be named*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Creating God, you shape the world so there is more than enough for all. Curb our habits of overuse, and guide us toward more sustainable sources of energy, food, and water. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Gracious God, your peace brings justice and solidarity. Encourage peace among peoples, tribes, and nations; heal divisions in our country and local communities, that together we might cooperate for the good of all. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Faithful God, you draw near to you all who are in need. Bring healing and wholeness to all who suffer (*especially*). Transform economic, political, and social systems that oppress vulnerable people, especially systems of structural racism and generational poverty. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Transforming God, you accompany all through changes and transitions. Help us to see where you are calling this community to new ways of living the gospel promise; assure us that even as change brings loss, it also brings hope and life. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Merciful God, you embrace us on our final pilgrimage from this life. Accompany all who have died, console those who mourn, and at the last, show us the way to eternal life in you. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We entrust these and all our prayers to you, holy God, in the name of your beloved child, Jesus Christ, our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 139:1-18. **Tuesday** James 5:1-6. **Wednesday** Jeremiah 1:4-10. **Thursday** Psalm 19:7-14. **Friday** Acts 12:20-25. **Saturday** Matthew 5:13-20. **Michael and All Angels** Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3; Psalm 103:1-5, 20-22; Revelation 12:7-12; Luke 10:17-20 *OR* **19th Sunday after Pentecost** Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29; Psalm 19:7-14; James 5:13-20; Mark 9:38-50.

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