

EMBRACING, CELEBRATING, REFLECTING GOD'S WORD  
Sermon Texts for Sunday, September 5, 2021

**Zooms for Wednesday, September 1 at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.**

As you prepare to hear God's Word from James 2: 1-10, 14-17 and Mark 7: 24-37, I invite you to: Just breathe. Let the Spirit fill the space in and around you. Just breathe.

**PRAYER:** Lord, thank you that you see us as we are and receive me as we are. Please enable us to come to you with humble faith to receive your mercy. In your name, Amen.

**EPISTLE READING:** James 2: 1-10, 14-17

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. 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.

**GOSPEL READING: Mark 7: 24-37**

24From there he 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 Syrophenician 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." 35And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36Then 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."

### **DISCUSSION STARTER QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

#### **From James:**

\*Why is favoritism considered sin and how is it damaging to the message Jesus entrusts us to proclaim?

\*What does favoritism and partiality expose about those who practice it? In what ways might we show this kind of favoritism in church today? How can we avoid this sin? What might be the results if we exercise non-partiality among all people?

\*What is God's Word calling me to do this week?

\*How committed are you to obeying God's Word?

\*What spiritual disciplines do I practice to help me know and grow--and show that God lives in me?

#### **From Mark:**

\*Why does it seem (even in verse 18) that the people of God, the disciples and the religious leaders are the ones who fail to see what they should see about God? What if anything do you think this says about you and me as disciples of Jesus today?

\*What does the woman's response in verse 28 indicate what she understands about herself and what she understands about Jesus?

\*Are we willing to humble ourselves before Jesus and to ask for whatever he has for us?

\*Martin Luther loved this story. It reveals God's love for all who have persistent faith in him and an accompanying disdain for their own "credentials." Where is your faith today?

**PRAYER:** Lord, thank you that you see us as we are and receive me as we are. Please enable us to come to you with humble faith to receive your mercy. In your name, Amen.