**Notes for Next Sunday**

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

**The Point of this Week’s Readings**

Except for the Epistle, there is a strong emphasis on trusting the Lord that is found in the other three readings.

Psalm (Psalm 146). This is an exhortation to trust in the Lord, Zion’s King. It is the first of five Hallelujah psalms with which the book of psalms closes. This may come from the time of the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. It certainly also would fit well into the days of Nehemiah.

Old Testament (Isaiah 35:4-7a). In spite of the worries and fears, God’s Word roars in with encouragement and hope. God is greater than the nations or anything that would turn our lives into a desert wilderness haunted by unclean things. Luther: “Though all devils were rolled into one, my God is greater still”

Epistle (James 2:1-10, 14-18). The first 10 verses have James exhorting his readers to not show favoritism. He reminds them that the rich whom they might esteem are the very people who harm them. In verses 14-18 James points out that true faith proves itself by the works Christians do in their lives.

Gospel (Mark 7:24-37) Jesus now moves to Gentile territory in His ministry. There are two healing miracles as a part of this text. In both of them there was great faith (trust) involved on the part of the people asking Jesus for help. In each case the people who asked for the miracle gave a very positive response. This was in contrast to Jewish audiences. Jesus especially tests the Syrophenician and she displays extraordinary trust in Him.

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

**Psalm 146**

**1﻿ Praise the LORD.﻿Praise the LORD, O my soul. ﻿2﻿ I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. ﻿3﻿ Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. ﻿4﻿ When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. ﻿5﻿ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ﻿6﻿ the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— the LORD, who remains faithful forever. ﻿7﻿ He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, ﻿8﻿ the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. ﻿9﻿ The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. ﻿10﻿ The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*146:1* *Praise the Lord, O my soul.* This opening line is an invitation in the plural, intended for all people. (PBC) This phrase is a translation of the familiar Hebrew word Alleluiah (or Hallelujah). It is a call that is addressed to all to engage in this holy business.

*146:3 do not put trust in princes.* The influential and powerful of the world, even the best of them, cannot be our ultimate source of confidence. Like Adam, all of them are dust and will return to the ground from which they came. (PBC)

*146:5–9.*  This is an exhortation to trust in the covenant God of Jacob, who as Creator is Lord over all. These verses give many reasons why they can trust in the Lord.

**Old Testament – Isaiah 35:4-7a**

**4﻿ say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.” ﻿5﻿ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ﻿6﻿ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. ﻿7﻿ The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*35:4 Be strong, do not fear.* In the previous chapter, the nations were invited to listen and pay attention to the revelation of the Lord’s anger. That announcement of judgment brought no comfort. Instead, the graphic, gory description was intended to shock and terrify. It did. Even believers may stand horrified by the graphic details, but no one is ever comforted by the threats of God. So God has a different message for His people: “Be strong, do not fear.” It is the gospel message. How often the Scriptures give us that message. God does not wish to terrify and threaten. Through Christ, sins that deserve fierce punishment from God are forgiven. (PBC)

*35:6* *lame leap … mute tongue shout.* The people of the Bible considered both those who were infirm and in the desert wilderness to be in the clutches of death – barren and worthless. This prophecy had at least partial fulfillment in Jesus’ ministry (Mk 7:31-37; Luke 7:22; John 7:37).

*35:7 springs.* The picture here is the wonderful change that the coming of the Lord would bring. It is a wonderful spiritual transformation. The change in the heart of every believer is such a miraculous transformation. Where there was death because of sin, life springs up by faith in the Messiah – cool, refreshing life, sustained by the Holy Spirit through the gospel. (PBC)

**Epistle – James 2:1-10, 14-18**

**My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism. ﻿2﻿ Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby 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: 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 insulted 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 slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? ﻿8﻿ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” ﻿ you are doing right. ﻿9﻿ But if you show favoritism, 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.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*2:6 rich who are exploiting you.* In this connection the apostle reminds the Jewish Christians of another fact: “Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before their tribunals? Do they not blaspheme the excellent name which was laid upon you by your call?” He speaks of the rich people as a class, characterizing them by the behavior which is commonly found where they have the power. They make use of violence, they oppress those that are not in their own class, they try to lord it over them at all times; they foster lawsuits, believing that their money will buy them the decision which justice would never render. (Kretzmann)

**14﻿ What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ﻿15﻿ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ﻿16﻿ If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ﻿17﻿ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ﻿18﻿ But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

During the Reformation, this passage became controversial because some interpreters viewed it as teaching justification through faith and works (synergism). Critical interpreters have viewed the passage as evidence that the apostles James and Paul taught conflicting doctrines. The notes here carefully consider the text, revealing that James is addressing a misunderstanding about faith (v 14) and for that purpose uses some terms differently than the apostle Paul, though not in conflict with Paul’s teaching. (TLSB)

**Gospel – Mark 7:24-37**

**﻿ 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 evil﻿ 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 their dogs.” ﻿28﻿ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but 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.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*7:25 possessed by an evil spirit.* What this entailed for a child is sufficiently suggested by a later account where the acute convulsions and uncontrollable falling into fire or water are symptoms of possession in a young boy (9:17ff.; 20:22-26). The mother’s anguish over her daughter’s condition is thoroughly understandable and does much to explain her bold persistence in begging Jesus to expel the demon from her child. (Lane)

*7:27* *the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.* Jesus’ response to this woman is surprising on at least two counts. First, He implies she is a dog, which was a great insult. Second, He suggests that He would serve Jewish people first (the children at the table). (TLSB)

*7:28* *Yes, Lord.* Jesus’ words seemed harsh. The Israelites often called the Gentiles “dogs,” meaning scavengers and animals. However the Greek word used here – and Christ seems to have been speaking in Greek to this woman – means “pet dogs” or “puppies.” The woman understood Jesus’ reply in that sense. She also caught the implied promise in the words: “First … the children” which suggested then the pets. Jesus had come to bring the gospel first to the children of Israel with whom the covenant had been made. Only then would it be brought to all others (see Acts 13:46). The woman acknowledged that as proper and right, but then also pressed her claim for the mercy she sensed in the words of Jesus. Our Lord rejoiced in the woman’s answer of faith and assured her that her daughter had been healed. He had not compromised His assignment. (PBC)

**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 him to place his hand on the man. ﻿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.”**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*7:31* *Decapolis.* These were ten towns in a territory east and south of the Sea of Galilee. Before the conquest of Canaan it was in habited by the Amorites. After the conquest it was known as Gilead and was inhabited primarily by pagan Gentiles. It was in this territory where Jesus permitted the unclean spirits to enter the swine and perhaps those who brought this deaf and dumb man were believers but that is not certain. (Buls)

*7:33 He took him aside.* Jesus took the man aside from the crowd to establish contact with him. He regarded the personal relationship between Himself and the sick to be of supreme importance, and in this instance all of His actions are intelligible in the light of the necessity of communicating with a person who had learned to be passive in life. (Lane)

*7:36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone.* Jesus commanded the people not to tell anyone because the Jewish people of His day had a totally false, political conception of the coming Messiah. Christ made it clear that He had not come into this predominately Gentile territory to organize a political insurrection. He had come on earth to lay down His life as a payment for the sins of the world. He was determined to let nothing compromise the purpose for which He had come. (PBC)

*7:37 He has done everything well.* This summarizes all of Jesus’ works. The Pharisees will demand more signs (8:11-12). The crowds were awed and remained positive toward Jesus but, like the disciples, did not truly understand who Jesus is. (TLSB)