

## Notes for Next Sunday

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

### The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 35:4-7a). The Lord prepares the salvation of His exiled people. Today, no matter what foolishness or fear has snared you, confess your sins in the confidence that the Lord has redeemed you by grace alone and has prepared for you a new way of life. • Take my trembling hand, Lord Jesus, and lead me to the comforts of Zion. Amen.

Epistle (James 2:1-10, 14-18). In verses 1:10 James rebukes an act that is inconsistent with the righteous life: judging others based on their appearance, wealth, or status. The desire for wealth leads us to lift up the wealthy and look down on the poor. This is not God's way. He shows no partiality but calls all people to faith in Christ and grants the same gift of salvation to all in the waters of Baptism. James calls us to look at one another as those for whom Christ died because the name of Christ has been given to us in Baptism (v 7). In verses 14-16 James discusses a false understanding of faith: mere knowledge that has no application or effect on the one who has it. This faulty understanding is just as wrong as the opposite error: focusing on actions alone apart from faith in Christ. True faith and its response of true good works cannot be separated. Works naturally follow faith. God has given us a great gift—through Christ Jesus, He has forgiven us and declared us righteous and holy. He now blesses us by calling us to serve Him in the lives of those around us. A living faith leads us to gladly share with others what we have freely received in Christ.

Gospel (Mark 7:31-37). Jesus heals another person in a Gentile region, further emphasizing His love for every race and kind of people. This serves as yet one more example of why we need to avoid the temptation to narrow the scope of the mission and to ignore opportunities to reach out to those who are different than ourselves. Jesus' healing of this man, immediately after He restored the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, underscores that He desires to love, cleanse, and heal all people. •

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 35:4-7a

**<sup>4</sup> 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.” <sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs.**

*35:4 Be strong, do not fear.* In spite of the aforesaid 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” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

*35:4 God will come.* The believer is to take heart because God, Himself, will come! What's more, His coming will not be quiet but powerful and with authority. Also God's coming has a specific purpose – “He will come to save you!” To him who says, “He is too far away, I cannot reach him,” the beautiful answer is, “You do not have to reach Him; He comes to you. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

*35:5 eyes ... ears.* God's salvation mentioned in verse 4 does the healing. When Jesus did miracles of healing he was declaring the presence of the messianic age in himself. While he did not heal everyone

while he was on earth the spiritual healing was done in his resurrection and was for all people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

*35:6 lame leap ... mute tongue shout.* The people of the Bible considered both those who infirm and 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). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

*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. <sup>2</sup> Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup> 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,” <sup>4</sup> have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup> 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? <sup>6</sup> 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? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? <sup>8</sup> If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. <sup>9</sup> But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. <sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? <sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> 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?**

*2:1 as believers ... don’t show favoritism.* Unfair act of judgment based on worldly criteria. God never shows partiality, and His people are commanded to act similarly. (TLSB)

*2:4 judges with evil thoughts?* Wealth-based distinctions between people do not reflect God’s vision and are therefore evil. (TLSB)

*2:5 Has not God chosen those who are poor ... ?* A person’s worth comes not from possessions but from his relationship to God. (TLSB)

*2:6 rich 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)

*2:7 blaspheme the honorable name.* Christ’s name (v 1). Rejecting the poor man, who was chosen by Christ, is rejecting Christ Himself. (TLSB)

2:8 *royal law*. “Royal” is the same Gk word as “kingdom” (v 5), indicating this is the “Law of the Kingdom”; that same Law is interpreted and fulfilled in Christ. Jesus quotes and applies frequently. (TLSB)

2:10 *guilty of breaking all*. Because all Commandments come from God, all must be obeyed perfectly. This was made clear in the giving of the covenant to Israel, as well as by Jesus. Even one violation falls short of the righteousness God requires. When we break God’s Law, we disrespect Him, for He established that Law. (TLSB)

2:14 *Can that faith save him?* Mere intellectual assent is not saving faith, nor does it produce fruit in response to God’s gifts. (TLSB)

2:18 *You have faith and I have works*. One cannot have right faith without the response of right works, nor can one do good works without faith. The problem is not that faith must have works to be real, but that some have separated faith from works (and works from faith). Faith cannot be separated from the response of works because the works naturally flow from the faith God plants. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – Mark 7:31-37

**<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “*Ephphatha!*” (which means, “Be opened!”). <sup>35</sup> At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. <sup>36</sup> Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. <sup>37</sup> People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”**

7:31 *Decapolis*. Decapolis, ten towns, was a territory east and south of the Sea of Galilee. Before the conquest of Canaan it was inhabited 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)

7:31 *deaf and could hardly talk*. Because those unable to hear have difficulty learning to speak correctly, it is probable that this man had been handicapped from birth. (TLSB)

7:34 *Ephphatha!* Aram word was used later in the Church’s baptismal liturgies in order to emphasize the Spirit’s power to open ears to the Gospel. (TLSB)

7:35 *the man’s ears were opened ... he began to speak plainly*. Once the man’s ears were healed, he was also able to speak clearly. He immediately put this gift to work in praise. (TLSB)

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