

SEPTEMBER 5, 2021
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



God's love breaks down boundaries.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Mark 7:24-37	Jesus heals the Gentiles
Monday	Isaiah 35:4-7a	Return of the exiled
Tuesday	James 2:1-17	Faith without works is dead
Wednesday	Hebrews 13:1-9	Service that pleases God
Thursday	Leviticus 19:33-37	Living a holy life
Friday	Ephesians 2:11-22	One in Christ
Saturday	Psalms 146	Praise for God's help
Sunday	Mark 8:27-38	Taking up the cross

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*[I]f 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," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? **James 2:3-4 (NRSV)***

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Almighty God, we thank you that your mercy triumphs over judgment and your love leads us to care for all people through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

For the food that we eat and the food that we share, give us, O Lord, thankful hearts that show care. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the Lord God bless you with an open heart to receive and to give love through Christ Jesus our Savior.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with
Your Love*



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What does it feel like to be left out of a group or not selected for a team?
- How do you react when you see someone being excluded from a group?
- Jesus showed love even to strangers. How would you describe the way you treat strangers?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Mark 7:24-37.

Jesus shows uncharacteristic rejection of someone in need. The Syrophenician woman asks for help, but she is not Jewish. She is a foreigner, and Jesus suggests he came for the children of Israel, not those outside of Judea and Galilee. However, perhaps he is speaking the voice of the early church that is likewise wondering what are the proper boundaries for the mission field of the church. The answer: Gentiles—therefore, all people—are part of God's arena of care and redemption through Christ. It is time for all ears, tongues, and hearts to be opened. God's power of love and forgiveness is so awesome that it knows no boundaries. Thanks be to God! God's compassion is present for all of us, stranger and friend alike. When have you reached out to a stranger with the love of God?

*Pray: **Loving God, just as you reach out to us with your grace and forgiveness, give us hearts to reach out to others that all may know your care through Christ Jesus. Amen.***

SERVICE

James 2 warns against worshipping communities showing partiality. Many congregations look very homogeneous. They attract people who look, act, and think like one another. Some of this is due to local contexts, but some of it is due to a lack of warmth and initiative taken toward new people. Who is someone who could use your warmth and care to help them feel welcome in your congregation?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Welcoming others with the peace of Christ has been part of the Christian tradition for two thousand years. Look up the sign language for peace. Teach it to others. As a way to practice reaching out to others with hope and love, you can greet others in your home, neighborhood, school, and work with these words: "The peace of the Lord be with you."



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org