

# 05 September 2021

## Sentence

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. James 2.13

## Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,  
increase our faith, hope, and love,  
and, that we may receive all you promise,  
make us love what you command;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Proverbs 22.1-2, 8-9, 22-23

- <sup>1</sup> A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.
- <sup>2</sup> Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all.
- <sup>8</sup> Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity, and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.
- <sup>9</sup> The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.
- <sup>22</sup> Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, <sup>23</sup> for the Lord will take up their case and will exact life for life.

## Psalms 125

- <sup>1</sup> Those who put their trust in the Lord  
shall be as Mount Zion:  
which cannot be shaken, but endures for ever.
- <sup>2</sup> As the mountains stand about Jerusalem,  
so stands the Lord about his people:  
from this time forward for evermore.
- <sup>3</sup> For the sceptre of wickedness shall have no sway  
over the land apportioned to the righteous:  
lest the righteous set their hands to do evil.
- <sup>4</sup> Do good, O Lord, to those who are good:  
to those that are upright in heart.
- <sup>5</sup> As for those who turn aside to crooked ways,  
let the Lord lead them away with the evildoers:  
and in Israel let there be peace.

## James 2.1-10, 2.14-17

<sup>1</sup> My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. <sup>2</sup> Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old 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 and sisters: 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 dishonoured 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 blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

<sup>8</sup> If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' you are doing right. <sup>9</sup> But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

<sup>13</sup> So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

<sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

<sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

## Mark 7.24-37

<sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet.

<sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. <sup>27</sup> '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 the dogs.'

<sup>28</sup> 'Lord,' she replied, 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'<sup>29</sup> Then he told her, 'For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.'

<sup>30</sup> She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

<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 Jesus to place his hand on him.

<sup>33</sup> After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spat 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 loosed, 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.'

WHAT GOES INTO A  
MAN'S MOUTH DOES  
NOT MAKE HIM  
UNCLEAN, BUT WHAT  
COMES OUT OF HIS  
MOUTH, THAT IS WHAT  
MAKES HIM UNCLEAN."

Jesus made a very controversial statement in our reading last week, he declared that the purity laws were not as important as the state of a believer's heart: All things are clean to those who are pure. This was a statement guaranteed to produce a backlash from all those whose job it was to see that everyone in Israel obeyed all the laws, so he tries to withdraw from the public eye for a short time. It doesn't work, people recognise him and the gossip mills in those days were even better than social media so within a very short time people are knocking at the door.



This lady is Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia, a gentile, not one of God's people but she has heard of Jesus and believes that he can heal her daughter.

Jesus has just pronounced everything clean; this girl is afflicted with an unclean spirit, both she and her mother are outside the protective fence that first-century Jews maintained around their special identity (Jews often called Gentiles dogs and Gentiles has equally insulting terms for Jews) and Jesus is asked to heal her.



This explains the odd exchange between Jesus and the woman. The tone of voice throughout, though urgent and (on the woman's part) desperate, is nevertheless that of teasing banter. The mother accepts the apparent insult and turns it to her own advantage. This exchange could fit very well into an Australian give-and-take, we often teasingly insult our friends and family and being able to turn an insult to our advantage is considered clever.

Jesus is conscious that it is his task to was to tell the Jews that their long-awaited deliverance was at hand. It would then be the task of God's people to bring the rest of the world into the saving grace and rule of Israel's God. He is not saying that the Gentiles have no place in the kingdom but that the time is not yet right, however he recognises that little bits of the kingdom will break through at various times.



He heals this child because he meant what he said about cleanness and uncleanness. The old barriers, the old taboos are being swept away. The dogs under the table do eat the children's bread that is dropped but very soon they will cease to be dogs and become children sitting at the table. The king of the Jews becomes the saviour of the world at his crucifixion.



I wonder who are the 'Gentiles' in our society. Who are the people we don't associate with? The poor we will always have with us, but do we write them off because they don't try hard enough? How do we feel about those who understand their sexuality differently to us? Do we happily

disregard all the purity laws of the Old Testament but cling desperately to an obscure verse in Deuteronomy? What about other nationalities, refugees, and even other religions? How can they ever hear that God loves them when we will not even give them the time of day? Every disadvantaged person in our society is a child of God and loved by Him. King Solomon knew the reality of this. Rich and disadvantaged have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all.

Do not exploit the disadvantaged because they are disadvantaged for the Lord will take up their case and will exact life for life.

James in writing to the church said: <sup>1</sup> My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism.

And then goes on to talk about the practical application of this principal.



*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?<sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?<sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

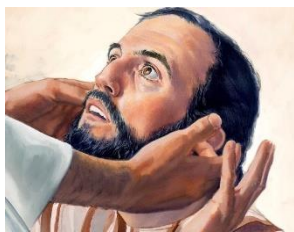
*Suppose a disadvantaged person in our community is without clothes, food, acceptance, or anyone to talk to. <sup>16</sup> If one*

*of us says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm, well fed and happy,' but does nothing about their needs, what good is it?*

If you do nothing else about following Jesus, follow the two great commandments: love God and love your neighbour., then act them out in your life. Love God: worship and praise Him and listen to his voice, love your

neighbour: look after everyone in your life, in practical ways and ask God to give you wisdom about the best ways to do that. He will open your eyes and show you what needs to be done. The most fun in all the world is being in partnership with God and seeing him work through you.





Jesus then goes on to another Gentile region near Galilee and heals a man who is deaf and cannot speak well and the people were overwhelmed with amazement. 'He has done everything well,' they said. 'He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.'

This is not just a word of amazement by the crowd it is an echo of Old Testament passages. In Genesis when God is creating the world, each day it proclaims, And God saw that it was good. And when Isaiah was prophesying about the messiah he said: 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.

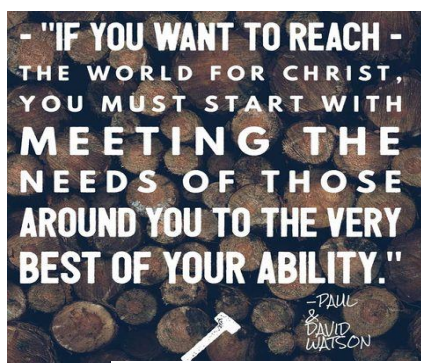


What Jesus was doing was an echo of his father's work and exactly what Isaiah had been told. This is another sign of the arrival of the messianic age. By linking the conclusion with God's creative power, Mark indicates the true source of all healing. God's power is at work, whether the healing takes place through medial intervention or as an unexpected event.

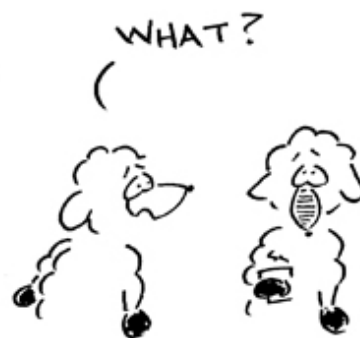
In loving all our neighbours, we need to keep doing God's work on earth, in our community and anywhere we have influence. We need to love our neighbours.

Just as the deaf man and his friends could not stop speaking about what Jesus had done so we need to talk about what Jesus has done in our lives and living his love for his children.

If we love our Lord we need, with him, to break down the barriers of prejudice and oppression and truly love him and serve his people in our community.



WWW.AGALUSTAL.ORG



MARK 7:31-37

© NETZSTERN 09.09.02