

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2024
NINETEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST
MARK 9:38-50 | "BELONGING"



ST. JOHN
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(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in bold print

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

PRELUDE: "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot", arr. Eithum

PENNIES FOR MISSION:

Deaconess Parsh Nurse Ministries

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP (Inspired by Psalm 19)**

One: Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, Holy One, our rock and redeemer.

Many: For we seek your presence, the company of this community, and the renewal of our minds and spirits.

One: Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, Holy One, our rock and redeemer.

Many: For you impart wisdom, inspire joy, and instill hope as we reflect on the past, live in the present, and consider the future.

One: Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, Holy One, our rock and redeemer.

Many: For wherever we gather in your name, we find holy ground; whenever we call you, we find a fresh encounter; however we know you, we find belonging.

Praise God!

***INVOCATION:**

Triune God, make us one as you are one. As we enter worship, may our harmony extend beyond our songs. May our distinctiveness be welcomed, our identities be celebrated, and our differences be a source of delight. May your church serve as a beacon for belonging and demonstrate the beloved community of the kingdom in your name this day and everyday. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 465**

“Teach Me, O Lord, Your Holy Ways”

*** UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Righteous God, we acknowledge the need for repentance and repair. We have confused seeking the common good with controlling our neighbor. We have conflated unity with uniformity. We have cosigned on societal norms that divide, segregate, and exclude rather than becoming agents of cultural change to bridge, welcome, and belong. Transform our hearts and stir our souls. Foster a spirit of curiosity, hospitality, and reconciliation to make things right with our neighbors, foes, and friends. Lead us on the path of belonging. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Wonderfully and fearfully made humans, you are not bound by the pressures of culture or the attitudes of your past. Even our embedded biases may be broken, our isolationist tendencies shattered, and our fearful reactions unlearned. You belong to the kingdom and the kingdom belongs to you. Press forward with the grace to transform and create a world reflecting the reign of God, with peace, justice, and righteousness for all.

***GLORIA: Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice) (end) One God always here. One God always here.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

7 When the king and Haman came in for the banquet with Queen Esther, ² the king said to her, “This is the second day we’ve met for wine. What is your wish, Queen Esther? I’ll give it to you. And what do you want? I’ll do anything—even give you half the kingdom.”

³ Queen Esther answered, “If I please the king, and if the king wishes, give me my life—that’s my wish—and the lives of my people too. That’s my desire. ⁴ We have been sold—I and my people—to be wiped out, killed, and destroyed. If we simply had been sold as male and

female slaves, I would have said nothing. But no enemy can compensate the king for this kind of damage.”

⁵ King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is this person, and where is he? Who would dare do such a thing?”

⁶ Esther replied, “A man who hates, an enemy—this wicked Haman!” Haman was overcome with terror in the presence of the king and queen.

⁹ Harbona, one of the eunuchs serving the king, said, “Sir, look! There’s the stake that Haman made for Mordecai, the man who spoke up and did something good for the king. It’s standing at Haman’s house—seventy-five feet high.”

“Impale him on it!” the king ordered. ¹⁰ So they impaled Haman on the very pole that he had set up for Mordecai, and the king’s anger went away.

The new holiday of Purim

²⁰ Mordecai wrote these things down and sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces, both near and far, of King Ahasuerus. ²¹ He made it a rule that Jews keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as special days each and every year. ²² They are the days on which the Jews finally put to rest the troubles with their enemies. The month is the one when everything turned around for them from sadness to joy, and from sad, loud crying to a holiday. They are to make them days of feasts

and joyous events, days to send food gifts to each other and money gifts to the poor.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 124 Page 706

SECOND TESTAMENT READING: James 5:13-20

¹³ If any of you are suffering, they should pray. If any of you are happy, they should sing. ¹⁴ If any of you are sick, they should call for the elders of the church, and the elders should pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ Prayer that comes from faith will heal the sick, for the Lord will restore them to health. And if they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ For this reason, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous person is powerful in what it can achieve. ¹⁷ Elijah was a person just like us. When he earnestly prayed that it wouldn’t rain, no rain fell for three and a half years. ¹⁸ He prayed again, God sent rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if any of you wander from the truth and someone turns back the wanderer, ²⁰ recognize that whoever brings a sinner back from the wrong path will save them from death and will bring about the forgiveness of many sins.

***GOSPEL: Mark 9:38-50**

Recognize your allies

³⁸ John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn’t following us.”

³⁹ Jesus replied, “Don’t stop him. No one who does powerful acts in my name can quickly turn around and curse me. ⁴⁰ Whoever isn’t against us is for us. ⁴¹ I assure you that whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will certainly be rewarded.

⁴² “As for whoever causes these little ones who believe in me to trip and fall into sin, it would be better for them to have a huge stone hung around their necks and to be thrown into the lake. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to fall into sin, chop it off. It’s better for you to enter into life crippled than to go away with two hands into the fire of hell, which can’t be put out. ^[a] ⁴⁵ If your foot causes you to fall into sin, chop it off. It’s better for you to enter life lame than to be thrown into hell with two feet. ^[b] ⁴⁷ If your eye causes you to fall into sin, tear it out. It’s better for you to enter God’s kingdom with one eye than to be thrown into hell with two. ⁴⁸ That’s a place *where worms don’t die and the fire never goes out*. ⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? Maintain salt among yourselves and keep peace with each other.”

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “Instructions”

Fall is “back-to-school” time for children, youth, and us. Actually, every season we are encouraged to keep learning, no matter our age.

Today’s passage from Mark sounds like instructions to me. As Jesus continues to teach, however, our first question is how does today’s passage relate to what we heard from Jesus last week; “Whoever wants to be first must be least of all and the servant of all.” Scholars believe that this whole passage of 9:38-50 did not come from one event. What is the saying about students? They can only sit for 40 minutes and listen for 20 minutes. Something like that. In other words, what Jesus taught the disciples took many semesters. So, why is this important?

For one thing we know that each Gospel author had their own audience; they were writing at different times in history, in different places, and for different reasons. HOWEVER, we also know that THEY ALL BECAME TEXT BOOKS AND LESSONS FOR US. EVERY TIME WE READ THE WORD “DISCIPLE”, IT MEANS US, you and me because our goal in Christian life is to be a disciple (meaning “a follower”,) an apostle (meaning “a

messenger” of the good news) and an example of a Christian.

Instructions on what it means to be a disciple were first introduced earlier in verses 33-37. “Whoever wants to be first must be least of all and the servant of all.”³⁶ Jesus reached for a little child, placed him among the Twelve, and embraced him. Then he said,³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me isn’t actually welcoming me but rather the one who sent me.”

Today’s passage, verses 38-50, do not really depart from that. Today’s passages treat the questions of who really is a disciple (verses 38-40); what is hospitality among disciples (verse 41); taking care not to offend new disciples (verse 42); the moral earnestness of the life of a disciple (verses 43-49) and the call to unity among disciples (verse 42).

In verse 37, behavior “in the name” of Christ is introduced. This is to say, living and acting in Christ’s name is clearly a signal that all this material is addressed to the post-Easter church. WHICH MEANS US, ALSO. During his ministry, Jesus did not teach his followers to wear or use his name. In fact, Jesus himself did not accept the name of Christ prior to his passion. The repetition of the phrase referring to Christ’s name

therefore joins the apparently different material as early Christian teaching on discipleship. AGAIN, REFERRING TO US.

What then, is being said in this passage? At least four areas of instruction are embed here.

1.) “Not being one of us” is not an adequate criterion for determining that a person is not a Christian. Granted, standards for discerning who was and who was not a disciple was a serious problem for the early church, especially in the case of itinerant exorcists, healers, and prophets. I THINK WE STILL HAVE THAT PROBLEM NOW. But not being “with us”, at least in Mark’s church, was no ground for exclusion.

2.) Hospitality was to be practiced freely and with minimal requirements. Even a cup of cold water given and received was not unnoticed or unrewarded.

3.) New converts are to be accorded special care and consideration. Causing one of them to stumble was as grave a sin for Mark as for Paul.

4.) The life of a disciple must be morally earnest inasmuch as our present behavior has eternal consequences. Nowhere in the Gospels is the language of Jesus more vivid and emphatic than in these calls to self-discipline and to arms against temptation. IF THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS, OUR CLASS IS DISMISSED. REMEMBER THE FINAL EXAM DATE IS AT THE DISCRETION OF OUR CREATOR.

HYMN OF RESPONSE: “He Leadeth Me”

He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
What e'er I do, what e'er I be,
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

(REFRAIN) He leadeth me, he leadeth me,
by his own hand he leadeth me;
his faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me.

2. Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur, nor repine;
Content, whate'er my lot may be,
since 'tis my God who leadeth me.
3. And when my task on earth is done,
When by thy grace the victory's won,
e'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
since God through Jordan leadeth me.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

With our voices we cry to you, O Lord; with our voices we make supplication to you, O Lord. We pour out our complaints before you; we tell our troubles before you and the adversities of our world.

Grant to your church the compassionate spirit of Jesus who saw many people, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. As we have enjoyed comfort and care in your congregation, may we welcome strangers and foreigners into our company that they may share your grace, your guidance, your words and the company and care from a church family.

Send us to those who have been scattered that they may be returned to your fold and to the lost that they may find themselves and commit themselves to your keeping.

Mortal but eternal Christ, you shared our humanity and know human weakness and strength. Hear our prayers for the sick and the aged. As their days shorten, so let their strength be lengthened. Encourage the depressed; give joy to those who are sad and sorrowing; strength the resistance of those who are tempted to evil; grant your grace to those who have fallen and lift them up again. Give peace to the dying and light at eventide.

We praise your hallowed name, Fatherly, Brotherly, Motherly God, as we pray together the prayer your Son taught us . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us

from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE: 772

**Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
God alone fills us.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

James 5:16b reminds us that, "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." May we offer our gifts as a prayer of trust that God provides, a prayer of resistance that declares that creation's abundance and sufficiency, and a prayer of hope that needs can be met. We pray with our mouths, our hearts, and our spirits. Let us also pray with our time, our talents, and our treasures.

**OFFERTORY: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus",
arr. Eithum**

***DOXOLOGY: Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

Creating God, thank you for hearing our prayer, receiving these gifts, and making them holy for your kingdom. Bless and honor every gift, enlarge our territory, and renew the resources as a demonstration of generosity and flourishing in your realm. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 181**

"You are the Salt of the Earth, O People"

***BENEDICTION:**

May the love of God uphold you
as your love of neighbor compels you.
May the peace of Christ sustain you
as the work of peace inspires you.
May the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit
direct you as the call to community beckon you.
Go, in the assurance of belonging to God
and one another in hope and joy. Amen.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE:

"Let There Be Peace On Earth"

POSTLUDE: "Amazing Grace", arr. Eithum

PRAYER LIST: