



58B PENTECOST 18B - ONLINE LITURGY

Courage and Prayer

Abstract

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

James 5:13-14

Jim de Jong
jim@dejongs.id.au

NEW TESTAMENT

James 5:13–20

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

GOSPEL

Mark 9:38–50

³⁸ “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

³⁹ “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

⁴² “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ^[44] ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ^[46] ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where

“ ‘the worms that eat them do not die,
and the fire is not quenched.’

⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire.

⁵⁰ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.” ⁱ

58B Pentecost 18B - Online Liturgy Courage and Prayer

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2021 | PENTECOST 18 | PROPER 21 | YEAR B

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Esther 7:1–6, 9–10, 9:20–22

Psalm Psalm 124

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Numbers 11:4–6, 10–16, 24–29

Psalm Psalm 19:7–14

New Testament James 5:13–20

Gospel Mark 9:38–50ⁱⁱ

	<p>Pre-Service Come let us worship and bow down (Tomlin)</p>
	<p>Introit</p>
	<p>Greeting</p> <p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all</p>
	<p>We Gather</p> <p>Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises.</p> <p>We come to worship to pray and to praise; We come to worship to listen and to learn. We come to worship to hear God’s Word; We come to worship to seek God’s ways. We come with open hearts and minds We come with courage, and with faith. We come to worship together. Amen!</p> <p>Acknowledgements</p>

	<p><i>Let us pray</i> May your words be on our lips, Lord, and your praise in our hearts, as we gather to seek your will.</p> <p>Almighty God, we come before you in gratitude for all that you have done for us; we thank you for your many blessings. We do not pray as if we were magicians, seeking a mysterious power; for we know you, God, through your Son; in him we raise to you all our concerns, and know that you will deal with them. Bless us now, as we gather before you. Amen.</p>
	<p>Hymn/song TIS #107 – “Sing praise and thanksgiving”</p>
	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Scripture readings today encourage us to have courage in our living, to face the things which impede our life of faith, and to bring all things to God in prayer.</p> <p>We each experience good times and challenges in our lives, and our faith enables us to face all of these knowing the presence of a loving, gracious God with us.</p> <p>How would you describe prayer to someone who has never prayed? When and how often do you pray? How do you expect your prayers to be answered?</p> <p>Think of a time when you felt your prayers were answered. Were they answered in the way you expected, or in a different way?</p> <p>As children, many of us learned to bow our heads, close our eyes and fold our hands.</p> <p>This pose at least stops the external distractions, if not the internal ones! You might pray before you get out of bed, or as you lie down to sleep. Many of us say grace before a meal or pray at certain times throughout the day.</p> <p>I know someone who prays each time she stops at a red the traffic light it saves her feeling frustrated when waiting! Prayer is conversation with God. It can be out loud or silent.</p>

It may not use words at all,
 some people pray in images or colours.
 You may colour in, or write, or dance, or sing, as a prayer.

You might whisper it under your pillow,
 or shout it from the mountain top.
 Prayer can express our deepest emotions,
 our hopes and dreams, our fears and frustrations.

Like any conversation, prayer involves listening,
 as much as it does talking or thinking.

Prayer is about being in right relationship with God.
 Prayer brings us closer to God,
 and allows us to hear and commit to God's ways.
 Prayer changes us.
 It has been said, prayer is not about changing God's mind
 but rather changing our lives.

The author of James tells us to pray in times of hardship,
 and to sing praises when we are happy.

Are we more likely to pray when you are struggling with difficulties,
 or when things are going well?

Prayer of Thanks and Praise

You are God of love and grace,
 who hears our prayers;

You are beyond our comprehension,
 yet you care for each of us intimately;

Your love was shown in Christ Jesus,
 who lived and died and rose again in mercy and love;

You are revealed in our world through the Holy Spirit,
 making known the one God and guiding our ways;

We know we can trust in you in all situations of our lives,
 and you are with us, in all our ups and downs, giving courage and strength.
 we give you thanks and praise.

Amen!

Prayer of Confession

The author of James also instructs us
 to confess our sins to each other
 and pray for each other that we might be healed.

The Greek word used for healing means 'to restore'
 or 'to make whole'.

	<p>When we have sinned, we find ourselves separated from God. Confessing our sins in prayer and receiving God's forgiveness restores us back into right relationship with God, and with each other.</p> <p><i>Let us pray</i> Loving God, we know that when we come to you in prayer, you always hear, and you always answer our prayers. This might not be in the way we would expect, but we can trust that you will respond, in love and grace.</p> <p>Forgive us the times when we sin against you: - through what we have said, and what we have left unsaid; (pause for silent reflection) - through what we have done, and what we have left undone; (pause for silent reflection) - intentionally or unknowingly. (pause for silent reflection)</p> <p>Forgive us our sins and restore us into right relationship with you. Give us the courage and the faith to right our wrongs with others, that we might be live in right relationship with each other. We pray in Christ, Amen.</p>
	<p>Assurance of Forgiveness James calls us to "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.</p> <p>The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power." (James 5:16).</p> <p>We have confessed our sins in the presence of each other, and we believe that prayer is powerful and effective. Because of this, we know that in Christ Jesus we are forgiven and made whole. Thanks be to God!</p>
	<p>Hymn/song/video TIS #685 – "Lord I come to you (The power of your love)"</p>
	<p>Readings</p> <p>James 5:13-20</p> <p><i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord Thanks be to God</p>

props - a letter that has been sent in the post, and a mobile phone.

We are thinking today about prayer.

What is prayer?

Maybe prayer is talking with God and listening to God.

If you want to tell some news to a friend.

The easiest way is to talk to them in person.

But what if they are not nearby.

You could go and visit them to tell them your news.

In the olden days,

if someone wanted to tell somebody some news,

they sent a messenger,

a man who ran or walked to tell that person the message.

When paper and pens became more widely available,

people started to send written messages,

especially once we became able to post them and have them delivered.

We often sent letters and cards in the post. (*Show letter/card/envelope*)

Or we could phone them up. (*show phone*)

There are many other options now

you could email, or text or Zoom, or use Facebook.

When we want to talk with God, we pray.

Most often we do that by talking in person,

even though we cannot see God,

we know that God is with us always and God hears us.

Sometimes we talk out loud,

and something we just think our prayers,

because God knows our thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes we write our prayers too,

so that others can pray them with us.

We pray because God wants to help us in our lives.

The Bible reading told us that if we are happy, we should pray.

If we are sad or troubled, we should pray.

If we have done something wrong, we should pray.

God hears all our prayers, and helps us to know the right way to live.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for being with us always.

Thank you that we can talk to you in prayer.

Thank you that you hear us, and you know what we need.

Teach us the right way to live,

we pray. Amen

Reflection

The author of James emphasises the importance of prayer,
in all aspects of our lives.

It can take courage to pray,
and then stop and listen to God's response.

Sometimes when we pray,
we ask God for what we think we want.

We just want God to give us what we ask for,
and we want his answer to be easy, comfortable and safe.

- Just change my circumstances.
- Just fix my problems like anger, pride, anxiety, stress, and selfishness.
- Just let me wake up in the morning and be different.
- Just give me the solution, please.

God doesn't just give us what we want when we want it.

God calls us into relationship,

And that involves an ongoing process of change, of growth,
of transformation and renewal.

If we ask for patience,
then get ready to face circumstances that will test your patience.

Ask for courage,
and then get ready to face circumstances beyond your capabilities
that may bring fear, anxiety and worry.

Ask for love, and then get ready to express love in challenging times.

As the saying goes,
Be careful what you ask for: you just might get it!

When we pray, we can expect a response.
However, it might not always be the response we expect.

"You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you,
anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord.

Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick,
and the Lord will make you well" (James 5:14,15)

This passage is often used as a prompt for prayers for healing.

The healing referred to here is restoration and wholeness.

This may or may not mean physical healing occurs.

A story.

Martin lived in a small rural community.

The minister at the local church was surprised one Sunday morning
when Martin came to worship.

He had never been before.

Martin was seen as a bit of a loner in that community.

People were wary of him, and he had few friends.

The minister followed him up during the week and went to visit.

Martin was glad to see him.

He explained that he felt prompted to come to church by a chance conversation.

He had just been diagnosed with cancer,

and did not have long to live.
He requested prayer.
The minister gathered a small group of elders together,
and they visited Martin at home.
They read James 5:13-20 out loud,
and then the minister asked...
“Martin, do you have any sins to confess?”
There was a bit of a silence.
Everybody knew that Martin had done his share of hard living
and was estranged from his children.

Then Martin started to pour out his confessions:
all the things which had been troubling him.
Although the elders were uncomfortable,
they knew that they were in the presence of God,
and they trusted in the power of prayer.

There were confessions that Martin needed to make peace about.
They prayed, and Martin prayed.
They anointed him with oil and they prayed for his healing.
Martin started reading the Bible.
He came back to church the following week.
Martin lived for another 6 months.
During that time, he was at worship every Sunday morning.

People began to warm to him.
He made friends,
and they invited him over to meals.

Some of those people would have honestly said
they would never have thought that could happen.
Martin got in touch with his family and said sorry.
They came to visit, and re-established their relationship.
It was not perfect, but at least they could talk,
and begin to put their differences behind them.

Then one day, Martin died.
It was not unexpected, but it took the church congregation by surprise.
They had prayed for Martin’s healing, but he died.
Why hadn’t God answered their prayers?

The Lord heals in many ways.
Sometimes there is physical healing.
Sometimes there is healing of relationships with others.
Ultimately our desire is spiritual healing:
Restoration into relationship with God
and experiencing God’s forgiveness and love.
In this way, we are made whole.

My dear friends,
if someone among you wanders away from the truth

	<p>and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins (James 5:19,20).</p> <p>Prayer such as this takes courage, and faith. We never know what to expect, and it might just change us.</p> <p>Amen</p>
	<p>Hymn TIS #590 - What a friend we have in Jesus”</p>
	<p>Reading Mark 9:38-50</p>
	<p>Reflection</p> <p>In the period just before Covid-19 hit at the beginning of 2020, if someone had suggested that we were about to enter a world of ‘social distancing’, ‘lockdown’, ‘furlough’ and ‘self-isolation’, we probably would have thought it was the plot of a new TV drama.</p> <p>The disciples hearing Jesus say the words may have had the equivalent first-century reaction. Better to throw yourself in the sea or cut off your limbs ...what was Jesus talking about? Surely this cannot be real?</p> <p>Just as, in hindsight, those pandemic words and phrases and the rules and way of life associated with them now make sense.</p> <p>In the Mark reading, Jesus promises a reward to outsiders who show Christians, these little ones, a bare minimum of goodwill (9:41), but he threatens <u>Christians</u> with dire judgment if they cause a little one who believes in him to slip. He uses hyperbole to make the pointⁱⁱⁱ</p> <p>The punishment for such an offense [is] so severe that it would be better for him to be drowned in the sea before he could cause one of these little ones who believe in Jesus to sin.</p> <p>The verb “cause to sin” (skandalisē; cf. v. 43) must be understood from a future judgment viewpoint (cf. vv. 43–48). It refers to enticing or provoking a disciple to turn away from Jesus, resulting in serious spiritual damage.^{iv}</p> <p>Jesus’ very graphic language begins to make sense as we look at the example of kingdom living given in the passage from James’ letter.</p>

Here we see people being encouraged to pray with those who suffer,
sing with those who are cheerful,
and anoint those who are sick.

Live as Jesus lived
–sharing and caring, treating and valuing everyone equally,
and all the time trusting and having faith in God.

Jesus' graphic imagery emphasizes the importance of these kingdom values,
which are so important that life without them is not really life at all
or not life as God intends it to be.

Life is where the things that are not part of kingdom living are eliminated
greed, self-centeredness, exclusion, bullying
and many other things that hurt, belittle or damage people.

Is this possible for us today?

James refers to the story of Elijah.
Elijah prayed for something that seemed impossible
specifically for the rain to stop and then start again;
you can read the full story in 1 Kings 17
and it happened.

It may seem impossible to us that,
given the way the world and society is now,
God's kingdom will come to fruition anytime soon.

The task is surely overwhelming.
Elijah thought the same.
But that didn't stop him or put him off.

And we should not be put off.
Let's pray for the impossible.
Let's look for God at work in what we are doing, of course,
but also in what others are doing
especially those of whom we might be tempted to say
'They are not with us.'
Let us be open to hearing Jesus' words speak into our experience:
'Whoever is not against us is with us.'
Let us encourage and welcome everyone and anyone
who is living and promoting God's kingdom values
or, if you prefer, way of living.
Let us encourage each to be the best people we can be
and never to be a stumbling block to one of God's beloved children.

Amen

Hymn/song

TIS # 599 – "Take my life and let it be"

	<p>Offering</p> <p>God of love and source of every blessing, we offer you these gifts, and our lives. Use us to bring healing and wholeness to our world, we pray. Amen.</p>
	<p>Notices</p>
	<p>Prayers for all people</p> <p>Prayer can be powerful: God responds. Let us keep this in mind as we pray for ourselves, for each other, and for the world.</p> <p>Gracious and loving God, we thank you that you hear our prayers, and respond. You hear us when we give thanks, you hear us when we ask for help and healing, you hear us when we ask for forgiveness, and you respond in love.</p> <p>We offer prayers for ourselves... (time of silence)</p> <p>We offer prayers for others (time of silence)</p> <p>We offer prayers for the world (time of silence)</p> <p>We bring you these prayers, spoken and unspoken and join with the prayers of others throughout time and place, as we pray together the Lord's Prayer...</p>
	<p>Lord's Prayer</p> <p>Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN ^v</p>

	<p>Hymn/song TIS #613 - "Lord of all hopefulness Lord of all joy"</p>
	<p>We are sent out</p> <p>We go from here to pray and to praise; We go from here to listen and to learn. We go from here to live out God's Word; We go from here to seek God's ways. We go with open hearts and minds We go with courage, and with faith.</p> <p>And our God of love and grace goes with us. Amen!</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace Amen</p>
	<p>Benediction Good Grace - Hillsong</p>
	<p>Thank you</p>

ⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

ⁱⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

ⁱⁱⁱ Garland, D. E. (1996). Mark (p. 369). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

^{iv} Grassmick, J. D. (1985). Mark. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 147). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^v English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988