

September 8, 2024

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time



AWAKEN

Becoming Disciples of the Word

Sunday's

READINGS

Isaiah 35:4–7a
James 2:1–5
Mark 7:31–37

Scan the code to read today's readings. ➔



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Isaiah 35:4–7a

In this passage, we are near the end of the Book of Isaiah, where Isaiah paints an image of a “second exodus.” In the first exodus, God freed the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. In this second journey of freedom, God will lead the remnant, the faithful ones, home from Babylonian captivity. Remember, too, that that people in this age understood physical infirmity to be the consequence of sin. Thus, as the blind are healed and the lame walk, God is forgiving sin. Notice, too, the image of life-giving water. It readily calls to mind Jesus’ words to the Samaritan woman in John’s Gospel: “whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:14).

James 2:1–5

This passage from the Letter of James presents the continuing journey of the disciples in developing an understanding of Jesus and his teaching. James reminds the disciples to show no partiality, because all are equal in God’s eyes. At that time, much as today, the wealthy and those deemed important were given special treatment. James is pointing

out that when we gather in the name of Jesus, we leave the world’s perspective at the door. When the community gathers, we take on the mind and heart of Christ, in which everyone is precious in the sight of God.

Mark 7:31–37

There is surprising detail in this account of a healing miracle. This is unusual for Mark, who is usually short and to the point. We first hear that we are in Gentile territory. Jesus takes the deaf man away from the crowd, another surprising moment. Yet, the details of the healing are not surprising. Because of our modern understanding of the spread of germs, the idea of exchanging saliva may give us pause. At Jesus’ time, however, it was a common practice of healers. They believed that sputum (saliva) had health-giving qualities. Then, after touching the deaf man’s ear, Jesus groans. What an interesting detail. Often a groan accompanies a strenuous activity. The healing of this man will take the work of allowing the Father’s power to flow through Jesus. Though Mark’s Gospel is written in Greek, *Ephphatha*, the word Jesus uses, is an Aramaic word. Mark immediately translates the word as “Be opened.”



Opening PRAYER

Dear Lord, how often am I deaf to your word in my life? Please open my ears to your words and move my heart to action. Amen.



Thoughts for REFLECTION

Do you treat people differently based on their status?

What are the signs of God’s Kingdom that would signal that his Kingdom has come?

Awaken is written and edited by Jo Ann Paradise, D.Min.





Points to Ponder

“Be Opened!”

The pall (cloth) that we place on the casket at the beginning of a funeral liturgy is a symbol of the garment of Baptism. At one time, the cloth was draped over caskets to cover the cost of the coffin. This is a good way to understand that status means nothing to the Body of Christ. That kind of vision is what helped Saint Damien of Molokai care for the wounds and disintegrating bodies of the lepers. It led Servant of God Dorothy Day to feed the hungry and speak the truth to the hierarchy of the Church. We often evaluate others by the standards of the culture. We need to keep the words of Jesus, “Be opened!” Allow the Holy Spirit to open you to God’s revelation. Recognize that our value is based on one thing alone: that we are the beloved of God.

- Why do you think it is difficult for some people to believe that they are God’s beloved?



...In this world I cannot see the Most High Son of God with my own eyes, except for His Most Holy Body and Blood.

—St. Francis of Assisi

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Visit the Pflaum Eucharist resources page.



and CHURCH TEACHING

Connecting **GOSPEL**

Open Hearts

So much of Scripture asks us to open our hearts or turn our hearts. We admit that our hearts are often closed and that we need to be freed of what blinds or enslaves us, especially when we try to understand God. “God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, image-bound, or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God—‘the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable’—

with our own human representations. Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God” (CCC, 42). Often our struggle with belief in God is really a struggle with the image of God we have formed. Some of the most necessary efforts we undertake on a spiritual journey is to be opened enough to see the images of God that we hold. Are they the God that Jesus revealed?

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 32–43 or go to Booklet 1, Session 2 in Growing Faith.



Closing PRAYER

To know you is to love you, O God. Send your Spirit to open my mind to consider the great mystery of your Being. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

Scan here for parent resources. ➔



Question of the Week

How can you use your voice to tell others about Jesus?



Family Prayer

Lord, help us to hear the Gospel, understand it, and tell others the Good News. Amen.