

## **Sunday, October 3, 2021 – Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

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### **Introduction**

Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

### **Prayer of the Day**

Sovereign God, you have created us to live in loving community with one another. Form us for life that is faithful and steadfast, and teach us to trust like little children, that we may reflect the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

### **First Reading: Job 1:1-1; 2:1-10**

*This passage is part of the prologue of Job. The righteous man Job is severely afflicted as the result of a wager between God and the satan (here not the devil, but "the accuser"). Job responds at first with great patience, but the rest of the book will show him lamenting and protesting.*

<sup>1</sup>There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

<sup>2:1</sup>One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." <sup>3</sup>The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason." <sup>4</sup>Then Satan answered the LORD, "Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. <sup>5</sup>But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." <sup>6</sup>The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life."

<sup>7</sup>So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. <sup>8</sup>Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

<sup>9</sup>Then his wife said to him, "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die."

<sup>10</sup>But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

## Psalm 26

<sup>1</sup>Give judgment for me, O LORD, for I have lived | with integrity;  
I have trusted in the LORD and | have not faltered.

<sup>2</sup>**Test me, O | LORD, and try me;**  
**examine my heart | and my mind.**

<sup>3</sup>For your steadfast love is be- | fore my eyes;  
I have walked faithful- | ly with you.

<sup>4</sup>**I have not sat | with the worthless,**  
**nor do I consort with | the deceitful.**

<sup>5</sup>I have hated the company of | evildoers;  
I will not sit down | with the wicked.

<sup>6</sup>**I will wash my hands in inno- | cence, O LORD,**  
**that I may go in procession | round your altar,**

<sup>7</sup>singing aloud a song | of thanksgiving  
and recounting all your won- | derful deeds.

<sup>8</sup>**LORD, I love the house in | which you dwell**  
**and the place where your glo- | ry abides.**

<sup>9</sup>Do not sweep me a- | way with sinners,  
nor my life with those who | thirst for blood,

<sup>10</sup>**whose hands are full of | evil plots,**  
**and their right hands | full of bribes.**

<sup>11</sup>As for me, I will live | with integrity;  
redeem me, and be gra- | cious to me.

<sup>12</sup>**I take my stand on | level ground;**  
**in the full assembly I will | bless the LORD.**

## Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

*Quoting from the psalms, this passage from Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus, the one through whom God created everything and who sits at God's right hand, is also the one who experienced human suffering and death in order to blaze the path of salvation for us.*

<sup>1</sup>Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup>He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>2:5</sup>Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. <sup>6</sup>But someone has testified somewhere,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
or mortals, that you care for them?”

<sup>7</sup>You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned them with glory and honor,  
<sup>8</sup>subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,<sup>9</sup>but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup>It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup>For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, <sup>12</sup>saying,  
“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

## **Gospel Reading: Mark 10:2-16**

*Jesus announced and enacted in history the new reality of God's surprising activity. These two stories demonstrate this new reality: Women and children are accepted and valued, not dismissed as inferior to adult men.*

<sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came, and to test [Jesus] they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” <sup>3</sup>He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” <sup>4</sup>They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” <sup>5</sup>But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. <sup>6</sup>But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ <sup>7</sup>‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

<sup>10</sup>Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup>He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup>and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

<sup>13</sup>People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup>And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

## Prayers of Intercession

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need, saying "God in your mercy," and responding, "hear our prayer."

*A brief silence.*

Holy One, you have raised up faithful leaders throughout history. Empower those discerning a call to ministry and all seminarians (*specific individuals known to the congregation may be named*), that they continue to be formed for the sake of the gospel. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have established a diverse and beautiful creation. Revive declining species and preserve endangered lands. Cultivate in us a sense of wonder for the world you created. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You desire for us not to be alone and to live in community with one another. Strengthen relationships between nations and peoples, that we celebrate and support one human family. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You share in our experiences and struggles. Bless all who live with any mental or physical disability. Inspire creative communities, spaces, and environments that are accessible and hospitable. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have established and nurtured relationships that extend beyond those gathered here today. Bless members who can no longer travel to worship with us (*especially*) and remind us of their continued role in this community of faith. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You promise eternal life to all your children. Thank you for the people of faith who have gone before us. Strengthen our trust we have in you. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## ***A reflection for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost...***

Who Would Jesus Bless Today?

Many Bibles include a heading before the latter part of today's gospel reading (Mark 10:13-16) that says something like "Blessing the Children" or "Jesus Welcomes the Children." In reading such a heading, we might begin to imagine a sentimental scene in which Jesus is surrounded by cute, adorable children. When we think about children being blessed in our churches today, we might imagine children gathering around the altar or at the front of the worship space for a children's time, in which the pastor or worship leader would say a prayer with them and give them a blessing. The parents and others may also be gathered just behind the children, smiling in adoration of these young ones.

However, we cannot view the scene from Mark's gospel with only our modern understanding of the role and place of children in society. The life of many children in North America is one of relative privilege, with carefree days in which they often experience the care and love of grown-ups. Jesus, by bringing the children to him, identifies himself with those who were among the most vulnerable and helpless in society. In ancient times, children often were treated like property. They had few protections from those who would treat them badly. But Jesus came into the world for ones such as these children. Who, in our communities, is in the place of the children of ancient times? As Christ's church, do we provide a place of welcome and care for the most vulnerable and weak in our society?

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