

SEPTEMBER 1, 2024
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



The faithful heart is filled with compassion.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23	Authentic faith
Monday	Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9	God commands obedience
Tuesday	James 1:17-27	Hearing and doing the word
Wednesday	Exodus 20:1-17	The Ten Commandments
Thursday	Psalms 103:1-14	Thanksgiving for God's goodness
Friday	Colossians 3:12-17	New life in Christ
Saturday	Psalms 15	Who shall abide with God
Sunday	Mark 7:24-37	Jesus heals the Gentiles

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. James 1:27 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Compassionate God, thank you for your commandments that not only show our misdeeds but also point us to the love of our neighbor through Jesus, the one who points us to you. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for this meal, for your commandments, and for the ways you care for us that we may live lives full of compassion. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God's love for you give you a caring heart.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK 
When the Poor Ones

WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What guidelines do you follow to live a good and healthy life?
- How are God's commandments a gift to us?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23.

In this reading, the Pharisees and scribes, who obey teachings of their ancestors, question the purity of the disciples. It is easy in our religious zeal to condemn certain conduct, like eating with unwashed hands, that misses the heart of the faith. This was true of Pharisees and scribes in the first century and followers of Jesus in the twenty-first century. What truly separates us from God's will is not our maintaining a superior cleanliness but not harming others with our conduct. The intent of God's commandments seeks to promote and protect life for individuals and for entire communities. Jesus mentions a number of sins, actions that destroy human relationships, like theft, murder, pride, deceit, and more, the kinds of actions condemned by the commandments of God. Jesus says, "*it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come*" (v. 21). It's the evil heart, destructive human intentions, that are so harmful to us and those around us. Following Jesus is about being freed from our own sins to care for others as God wills us to do.

Discuss: How do God's commandments protect you and others?

Pray: **Righteous God, thank you for leading us to acts of love and mercy through Jesus, the one who came that we may be freed from all that separates us from you. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, how can you show kindness and mercy to others this week?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

In James 1:17-27, we are told to "*be doers of the word*" (v. 22). Christian spirituality involves a life of action, a life of service. Take a moment to think or talk about what this means to you. Open your Bible to this reading. Highlight or underline words that describe ways to be a doer of God's word.

Pray: **Lord God, help me to be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, and a doer, not merely a hearer of your word. In Jesus' name, amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org