

Notes on Lectionary Readings - SEPTEMBER 20-26, 2021

Jesus Is an Experience

[Extract from Disciplines 2021: Upper Room]

SCRIPTURE OVERVIEW: The Jewish people have faced possible destruction numerous times. The story begins not with the Holocaust in Europe but far back in history during the time of Esther. Although we may not face genocide, we have our own struggles. James encourages us to pray with faith, believing that God can and will answer. Jesus teaches us the importance of letting nothing stand between God and us.

Read Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22.

Situation - The wicked Haman plots to wipe out God's people, but God saves the people through Esther's courage.

Question - When have you chosen to speak out in a way that made you vulnerable in order to help someone else?

Prayer - God of mercy, help us to be willing to take risks when we find ourselves in situations like Esters. When our choices impact others' lives, give us the wisdom and courage to be faithful. Amen.

Read Psalm 124.

Theme - The psalmist praises God for a salvation from seemingly impossible circumstances.

Questions - Recall a time when you had a strong sense of God's being on your side. What was the situation? How did that assurance come?

Prayer - Whenever you feel engulfed or overwhelmed by a difficult circumstance, try praying through Psalm 124 and naming the specific situations and difficulties, when God has been at your side. Amen.

Read James 5:13-20.

Situation - Our prayers are powerful, James assures us.

Questions - How do the members of your faith community pray with and for one another?

Prayer - Merciful God heal the brokenness in our hearts and minds. Take our fragile bodies and strengthen them for today. Allow us to walk in the healing steps of Your love. God of mercy, inspire us to come to Your alter and pray. Amen.

Read Mark 9:38-50.

Situation - Jesus admonishes us to put the pursuit of God above everything else and to support others in that same pursuit.

Questions - Whoever is not against you is for you. How can you share God's love with those outside your inner circle?

Prayer - Lord we stumble so often on the journey. And sometimes we cause others to stumble by putting blocks in their way. Forgive this destructive behaviour and transform our minds to follow the path of wholeness and Grace that you are for us each day. Thank you for your faithfulness. Amen.