

Sunday Readings Reflections of 9/6/15

Reading 1 Isaiah 35:4-7

Times of fear and hopelessness make our hearts feel pinched and small. When the people of the kingdom of Judah were threatened by their enemies, God took pity on their fear and hopelessness. He sent the prophet Isaiah with a message that strengthened them. Isaiah foretold a time when God would come to save his people. The signs of God's coming would include the healing of the blind, the deaf, and the lame.

These signs of the Messiah's coming were later fulfilled by Jesus as the One sent by God. We who follow him are called to share his work of caring for the weak, the sick, and the poor among us.

Reading 2 James 2:1-5

The expression "telling it like it is" definitely fits this reading. Saint James points a finger at the common practice of showing greater respect to the rich than to the poor. When this kind of discrimination is practiced in a church setting, it is an even greater offense than it is elsewhere. James reminds us that poor are especially loved by God and are chosen to be "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom."

As members of the faith community, we are to share God's love and concern for the poor who live in our midst. They may be poor in financial resources. Or they may be poor in spiritual or intellectual gifts. Whatever they lack, they are never to be discriminated against or thought less important than those who are in any way poor.

Gospel Mark 7:31-37

What was promised in today's first reading we see fulfilled in this gospel story. A man who is deaf and suffers from a speech impediment is taken by his friends to see Jesus. Moved by the man's pitiful condition, Jesus takes him aside and performs a healing ritual. He concludes by praying that the man's senses "Be opened!" And the man begins immediately to hear and speak plainly.

Despite Jesus' command to keep the miracle a secret, the crowd goes wild with excitement and spreads the news throughout the region. They praise Jesus because "He has done everything well!" Jesus, however, does not want them to expect a Messiah who will bring them political power and economic riches. He was a Messiah who used God's power only to serve others and not to avoid suffering himself.