

## Worship Resources - [Qualified](#)

**Pentecost 18, Year B,**

26<sup>th</sup> September, 2021

**James 5:13-20 CEV / Mark 9:38-50 CEV**

### **Prelude** [With Happy Voices Singing](#)

By **George Vause, Rev William George Tarrant**, played by Annie Center,  
used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 202612146

<https://youtu.be/kDR2IIflyIk>

### **Call to Worship/Words of Welcome**

You call us into this space, O God, Inviting us into a time of worship.  
You call our hearts, O God, Inviting us to know Your love.  
You call us by name, O God, Inviting us to know You more deeply.  
Continue to call to us, O God, And may we know Your grace and peace.

**I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.**

**As we gather today, let's reflect on the presence and leading of the Spirit in our lives, as individuals, and as a community, as we listen to the following song, There's a Spirit in the Air**

### **Reflection video** [There's a Spirit in the Air](#)

written by Brian Wren

performed and posted to YouTube by the Olive Tree Church,  
Luton Lockdown Choir, used with permission and  
reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

<https://youtu.be/d8r-AkLkxtU>

### **Invocation**

Christ Jesus,  
we come into your presence from many different places. We come with songs of joy and shouts of gratitude. We come carrying heavy burdens and sighs of suffering. As you welcome us into your house, lift our burdens and receive our praise. Salt us with your grace and flavor us with your mercy. Bind us together, that we may be at peace with one another and be strengthened to go forth in service to the world. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

**We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.**

**In our reading from James, we're reminded of the power of prayer. As we listen to these words, let's reflect on the place prayer holds in our own lives, and how much we include the needs of others in our prayers.**

## **Epistle Reading                      James 5:13-20 CEV**

If you are having trouble, you should pray. And if you are feeling good, you should sing praises.

If you are sick, ask the church leaders<sup>[a]</sup> to come and pray for you. Ask them to put olive oil<sup>[b]</sup> on you in the name of the Lord.

If you have faith when you pray for sick people, they will get well. The Lord will heal them, and if they have sinned, he will forgive them.

If you have sinned, you should tell each other what you have done. Then you can pray for one another and be healed. The prayer of an innocent person is powerful, and it can help a lot.

Elijah was just as human as we are, and for three and a half years his prayers kept the rain from falling.

But when he did pray for rain, it fell from the skies and made the crops grow.

My friends, if any followers have wandered away from the truth, you should try to lead them back.

If you turn sinners from the wrong way, you will save them from death, and many of their sins will be forgiven.

## **Scripture Video                      James 5:13-20**

### **[Prayer And Anointing In The Community](#)**

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/LC5of2v09s0>

## **A Time of Prayer**

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: [vicarglenn@gmail.com](mailto:vicarglenn@gmail.com), and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

## Joys and Concerns

This morning, we continue to express joy at the arrival of Matthew and Madison's son Dwayne. May they be blessed by this precious gift of God.

We also continue to keep Robert Oberg in prayer as he has been gradually making progress in his recovery in the nursing facility.

We also keep several of our younger members in prayer as they find themselves recently unemployed, and seek new jobs.

## Pastoral Prayer

**Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.**

Father of Lights, from whom comes every perfect gift, hear our prayers which we offer fervently to you, and in the name of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for the church, that we might show forth our faith in action, regard all with impartiality, and be quick to listen and slow to anger.

We pray for our nation, that whenever trials may befall us, that God may grant us endurance and wisdom.

We pray for the world, that the lowly may be raised up, and that mercy may fall on us all.

We pray for the sick, the injured, the vulnerable, and those undergoing all forms of adversity, that they might all be raised up.

We pray for those who have died that they would draw near to God, and that God would draw near to them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Gracious God, let our prayers be offered to you with the gentleness that is born from your wisdom from above, that is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, and full of mercy. Amen.

**In our gospel lesson this morning, we hear Jesus make a powerful statement about judging or stereotyping others. As we hear these words from Mark, let's reflect on how guilty we may be of making assumptions of others without actually getting to know them.**

## Gospel Lesson      Mark 9:38-50 CEV

John said, “Teacher, we saw a man using your name to force demons out of people. But he wasn’t one of us, and we told him to stop.”

Jesus said to his disciples: Don’t stop him! No one who works miracles in my name will soon turn and say something bad about me.

Anyone who isn’t against us is for us.

And anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name, just because you belong to me, will surely be rewarded.

It will be terrible for people who cause even one of my little followers to sin. Those people would be better off thrown into the ocean with a heavy stone tied around their necks.

So if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off! You would be better off to go into life crippled than to have two hands and be thrown into the fires of hell that never go out.[a]

If your foot causes you to sin, chop it off. You would be better off to go into life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.[b]

If your eye causes you to sin, get rid of it. You would be better off to go into God’s kingdom with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell.

The worms there never die, and the fire never stops burning.

Everyone must be salted with fire.[c]

Salt is good. But if it no longer tastes like salt, how can it be made salty again? Have salt among you and live at peace with each other.[d]

## Scripture Video      Mark 9:38-50

### [Warnings To Those Who Obstruct Faith](#)

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/G2ZoJ0POXdK>

When we think of our faith, do we ever think in terms of people being “in or out?” In other words, are there people that meet certain qualifications to be included, while others are excluded? The Christian religion has had a number of litmus tests throughout its existence to define just that.

In the early Catholic church, one had to be baptized as an infant and go through confirmation to be assured of being “included.” With the predestination concept of Calvin, God already decided who was in and who was out, and you prayed you were one of the select. Then with the rise of evangelical fundamentalism, which was the tradition I was raised in, you needed to say the sinner’s prayer, and have a conversion “experience” to qualify. We certainly seem to be good at establishing criteria to define our own salvation, as well as the salvation of others.

So where do we get all these qualifications and requirements? Well, many have some basis in scripture. The Great Commission in Matthew 28 tells us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Acts, baptism goes hand in hand with the multitudes that were converted. 1 John 1 indicates that we should confess our sins to be forgiven and cleansed. In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus we must be born again, and cleansed by water and spirit. So the basic concepts are there in scripture, but far from the neatly defined criteria we have established over the millenia. So who is in and who is out, and how do we make that determination? Should we even think in those terms?

In our Gospel lesson this morning, Jesus does shed some light on this question. To give this some context, in the verses preceding today’s reading, the disciples are arguing among them as to who is the greatest. Then we have today’s story where John informs Jesus that they put a stop to someone doing exorcisms in Jesus’ name because he was not following “us.” That’s a very interesting choice of vocabulary, and a little telling, I think. John didn’t say the problem was that the person casting out demons wasn’t following Jesus, he wasn’t following “us.” These same men who were just arguing about who was greater in their little organization are now deciding who belongs and who doesn’t, based on membership in their club. Does that sound familiar? I think most of us have a sense of those who are like us, and those who are different. Growing up, I had a real sense of who met the “criteria” of our brand of Christianity, and who didn’t. I don’t remember it ever being said explicitly, but I always had the sense that there were those who called themselves “Christians” but weren’t really saved. Our denomination had missions to Germany and France to convert those wayward Catholics to our brand of faith.

We see it in our own denomination. There’s the progressives and the conservatives, and both sides see the other as following a faith that’s errant in its interpretation, and not part

of “us.” But it’s not just in church circles that we feel this tension between “us” and “them,” between who’s in and who’s out. In every aspect of our lives there are those who are more like us than others. In ethnicity and culture, there’s a wide array of differences and appearances. In income level and class, there are those with more, and those with less, those who can dress well, and those who are lucky to have clean clothes to wear. Even those who are Christian, and those who practice other faiths, or no faith at all. We all like to feel comfortable and at ease, and we have more in common often with people who have similar backgrounds and experiences, so naturally we gravitate to those groups we can more easily identify with.

The problem occurs when we respond as the disciples and dismiss those who aren’t with “us,” who aren’t part of our group. Jesus tells us in today’s scripture that “those who aren’t against us are for us.” How easy is it though, for us to start to see those who are different from us as being “against” us? Of being suspicious of those who look or think differently? We certainly hear enough about how threatening those outside our particular group can be in the public arena. The liberal conspiracies, the callous cruelty of conservatives, the dangerous immigrant, the minorities in the inner cities, the threat of Islam and Sharia law, the gay agenda, the list goes on and on. The question is, are those suspicions really that accurate?

I’m reminded of the old stereotype that politicians are likely to “massage the truth” a little bit. That’s probably as generous as that can be said. With that in mind, I found it interesting recently when PolitiFact celebrated their tenth anniversary. PolitiFact is a non-partisan, independent organization that fact checks statements by politicians (and others). With each statement, they rate it “True,” “Mostly True,” “Half True,” “Mostly False,” “False,” and “Pants on Fire!” After ten years, they rated 13,524 statements by those measures. That’s a lot of work. One thing that I thought was interesting: the most common rating was “Half True.” A little bit of truth, but not enough. It is easy to mock politicians for their elastic relationship with the truth, but to a substantial degree they are simply echoes of the human condition. So often we believe what we want to believe and ignore what we find inconvenient. We even have words for that now, “alternative facts.” As Christians do we hold onto the essential “fact check” that we want as much truth in our lives as possible? Do we push aside convenient lies and avoid misleading statements because that separates us from God’s truth? Or do we stigmatize others out of our own discomfort with people and ideas that are different than our own. A better word might be judge.

Yet Jesus tells us not to put a stumbling block “before one of these little ones.” We’re expected to let Jesus be our criteria, not our own insecurities. If any part of us causes us to stumble, we’re to rip it off and discard it rather than risk losing our participation in the kin-dom of God. When we feel ourselves looking down on a brother or sister, judging them because they are different, do we take a step back and reconsider the path we’re on? When

someone on the TV or the internet tells us the evils of this group or that group, do we let that lead us into fear and distrust or do we take it with a grain of salt? According to Christ, the consequences of our choice can be dire. We can be with God, or separated from God and the kin-dom.

Jesus tells us we are “salted with fire.” Salt had a lot of meaning in the ancient world. It preserves and cures. It sterilizes. It is vital to life. Without salt, we can’t retain the fluid we need to survive. It was so valuable that it was rumored in early Roman times, soldiers were paid at least partially in salt. The root of our word salary comes from the Roman word, *salarium*, which means salt. But most commonly, like today, it was used to enhance flavor, to make food palatable. But if it loses its flavor, it’s value is greatly diminished.

Jesus tells us that we are to be people with distinctive flavor, different from the spiritually bland world around us. We are to be something entirely different from what the world has to offer. Are we? Do we resist the urge to dismiss those who are not a part of “us?” Do we buy into the stereotypes and misrepresentations that others would have us believe? It comes down to how we define ourselves and others. Is our primary identity our ethnicity and culture, our neighborhood, or our family connections? Or is it our faith as a follower of Christ? Are we in this world, or of this world? Do we have our own “in” or “out” criteria?

Our passage this week closes with Jesus telling us to “have salt in ourselves and be at peace with one another. Every Sunday that we meet in person, we share the peace of Christ with each other. My prayer is that we share the same love and peace with ALL those we meet outside these doors, basing our opinions on the individuals we meet, not by the stereotypes of the groups to which they belong. May it be so. Amen

## **Call to Serve.**

**Having recognized the many gifts we bring and receive from one another, let us share what we have in gratitude.**

**As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today, as we listen to the following selection played by Annie, let’s reflect on who we may make assumptions about in our own lives, and what we can do in the coming weeks to find out who they really are.**

## **A Time for Reflection**

## Reflection on the Word [video]

## [You are Salt for the Earth](#)

music by Marty Haugen,  
played by Annie Center

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjEBOMMPWQ0>

## The Prayer of Thanksgiving

May these tangible gifts and all the intangible gifts we share among us make known to the world that God is within us and among us.

## Blessing/Assurance

Be the salt of the earth! Give flavor to the world! Preserve what you know of God's love, mercy, and peace, and share it with others. Open your hearts to receive God's mercy, forgiveness, and grace, and go and share it with the world, for you are forgiven, loved, and restored. Amen.

**As we extinguish this candle, let's carry it's divine spark out into own lives this week, shining God's like into the lives of all we encounter. Amen.**

## Postlude

## [Now Go Forward](#)

translated by Evelyn Chiu, played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/5i9FdEjtBO4>