

Lessons for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 9, 2018

Psalm 146 ~ *The psalmist urges trust in the creator God of Israel who sustains the needy and oppressed.*

Isaiah 35:4–7a ~ *Miraculous restoration of health, in body and in nature, will signal the messianic day.*

James 2:1–10, 14–18 ~ *Living faith calls forth caring actions for the poor and justice for the oppressed.*

Mark 7:(24-30) 31-37 ~ *A mother's faith and that of a deaf man's friends moved them to seek Jesus' help.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Signs of the Times

In Babylon the captive Jews saw their condition and imagined that God had given up on them. Isaiah's message is filled with comfort: "God will restore Israel to Zion; you will see it in the restoration of health and the new life of joy." Jesus brought not only signs of healing, but even the waters of salvation and new life by his death on the cross. James tells us that we Christians are to be signs of the times with our lives, so that others may believe in our good and gracious God.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord God, You create all things new and good again by Your presence in Word and Sacrament. In Your Son, Jesus Christ, You have given Your answer of redemption and healing for the world. Help me make things better around me by the words I speak and the gifts of love I give. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Through Christ, God has healed our hearts, broken by sin, and given us new life in His redeeming love; He calls us in faith, to respond to the poor who are crushed by the injustices of society and inequities of life, using our resources of body and spirit to demonstrate God's love to our neighbors.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, You brought healing in Your Word; You make all things new and good. We dedicate these gifts to You; Help us use them as we should To bring new life in word and deed for all who suffer want and pain. Let our faith be shown in love, as we witness Jesus' name. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: In the summer heat, we can certainly identify with burning sand and thirsty ground! But we may resist when we realize Isaiah is describing the condition of our hearts when we make our religion a practice of partiality and preferences. God reached out to the people of Isaiah's day who felt abandoned and deserted, promising to restore them to Zion and make them signs of God's redeeming love. Through Christ we are also restored in God's mercy and readily become signs of healing and help to the poor and displaced around us