

**Prayer and Study Group
Emmanuel Church
West Roxbury, MA 02122
Saturday, September 18, 2021
5:00 pm**

Below is the Gospel reading, Prayers and discussion questions for September 18, 2021.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 9:30-37

Jesus and his disciples passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

COMMENTARY by Kristen Gunn

In this run of interwoven passages in Mark’s gospel, Jesus’ disciples are thinking (as we all do, unaided by God’s grace) along pretty unfailingly earthly lines. This section takes us straight into the heart of the tension between natural and grace-assisted ways of thinking. Earthly habits of thought, as we see in verses 30-32, can’t begin to comprehend the mystery of the Resurrection. And the disciples don’t comprehend it on their own. We are told they are too “afraid to ask” (v. 32). Jesus’s mercy in this case pierces through their silence. Instead of rebuking them for their human preoccupation with rank and order (v. 34), he gives them an object-lesson (really a human-being-lesson) and an example when he takes a child into his arms. He takes the lowest-status person in the house—who is also probably the simplest and least complicated—and embraces him. And not only that: he says that to embrace the low status simple child in his name is to embrace *God*. Whoever recognizes this and does it is on the way to true greatness.

- What does it mean to welcome someone “in [Jesus’s] name?” Does this verse/teaching mean the same thing as it would without the phrase “in my name?”
- How might you be called to welcome Jesus this week? Is there a “child” in your midst?

Kristen Gunn is a student at Nashotah House Theological Seminary, where she is happily plucking away at a Master of Theological Studies degree. A Houston native, she started reading C.S. Lewis and the Bible on her own in high school and has never been the same since. Before moving to Wisconsin, she earned a bachelor's degree in religion and linguistics and taught English to refugees through an Episcopal fellows program in Dallas. She loves all kinds of water recreation, petting other people's cats, and dancing in the patristics section of the library when she thinks she is alone.

The Prayers of the People

Jesus calls us to give up our lives for others. That we may have the faith to live as Jesus did, let us pray for all in need, saying: Send us your Spirit, O Lord.

O gracious God, you have given up your very self to save the world. That we may be empowered to give up ourselves for one another, we pray:
Send us your Spirit, O Lord.

You have made your people equal and free in the baptism of your Son. That we may live joyfully in this new way, we pray:
Send us your Spirit, O Lord.

You call us to take up our cross and follow the way of Christ. That we may serve one another and live in obedience to your word, we pray:
Send us your Spirit, O Lord.

You show to us all the poor and the needy, all the homeless and the hungry. That we may lighten their load by taking it upon ourselves, we pray:
Send us your Spirit, O Lord.

You give us enough that we may share with the needy. That we and all institutions of relief may be insistent in our care for others, we pray:
Send us your Spirit, O Lord.

[Here other intercessions may be offered.]

You have surrounded us with saints of every time and place. That we may follow them as they followed Christ on the way to the cross, we pray:

Hear our prayers, O merciful God, and accept our praises. May the gospel of your cross give its miraculous life to all the world, through Christ our Lord.