

**Prayer and Scripture Study**  
**Emmanuel Church, West Roxbury, MA**  
**September 25, 2021**

**Below is the Gospel reading, Prayers and discussion questions for September 25, 2021.**

**GOSPEL READING**

Mark 9:38-50

John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” But Jesus said, “Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

“For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.”

**COMMENTARY by Darren Steadman**

*Mark 9:38-50*

My grandfather is known to have said, “My purpose in life is to get to heaven and take as many people with me as I can.” Here, Jesus gives us a piece of that roadmap. First, the well-known, “Whoever is not against us is for us,” warning us to avoid looking for reasons to make enemies. Then, a dramatic and thorough drama about the more perilous parts of the journey. There may be temptation on the way, but stay the course and sacrifice anything to persist in the journey. Winding up in heaven without an eye, hand, or foot is still better than wandering around for eternity. In fact, wandering so far off course so as to cause sinfulness in a child is worse than a painful death itself.

After all that, it’s the third piece that is the hardest to interpret. Taking salt to represent a purification, preservative, or maybe a binding contract, Jesus says that we will all be purified and preserved eventually. We will soon be bound by an everlasting contract. So, it’s best to start here and now, to purify ourselves to prepare for this journey. “Be at peace with each other” – this must be the way to properly train for an

expedient trip, no detours. Perhaps Jesus is hinting that the best way to get to heaven is to start living now like we are already there.

- The phrases used here are about entering into life and the kingdom of God, not heaven. How would our choices and behaviors change if we believed that heaven could actually begin in this life?

### **The Prayers of the People**

*We have heard today of the cost of discipleship. That we may be empowered to bear the name of Christ, let us pray for ourselves and for the whole world, saying: Lord, hear our prayer.*

The church of God is fragmented; we need the healing of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray for the church.  
*Lord, hear our prayer.*

The world cries out for an increase of justice and for an end to war. Let us pray for the world.  
*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Our country is striving for equality and a better life for all its citizens. Let us pray for our nation.  
*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Our community seeks a better sense of its gifts and more wisdom into its problems. Let us pray for our community.  
*Lord, hear our prayer.*

We know many people who are sick and suffering, who have public hurt or private pain. We pray especially for Paul, Mary, Catherine, Brant; Carla, Michael, Parker, Sergio, Martha, Gail, Hal IV and Anne. Let us pray for all in need.  
*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Our lives have been enriched by the lives of all those like Moses, the elders, and the disciples who have gone before us in faith. Let us pray for grace to be disciples.  
*Lord, hear our prayer.*

*[Here other intercessions may be offered.]*

*We are thirsty, O merciful God; give us a cup of water to drink. Hear our prayers and answer our cries of need through your Son, Christ our Lord.*