

Sunday Scripture Readings in September

First Readings

Proverbs—September 6, 13, 20

Most of this book consists of instructions on how to lead a moral life, with proper respect for God. Life involves choices; it is important that one be informed and trained to make the right ones. The objective of life is attainment of wisdom which brings rewards. Wisdom is personified (8:22-31 and chapter 9) as God's handmaiden who delights in the works of creation.

Esther—September 27

Set during the Jewish exile (486 to 465 BC), the book of Esther is a description of the escape of the Jewish people from annihilation in Persia due to the heroism of Esther whose courage and faithfulness save her people. Its theme of divine help to persecuted Jews is also found in other books such as Judith and Daniel.

Psalms

The Book of Psalms —*September 6, 13, 20, 27* is the hymn book and prayer book of the Jewish people and a favourite Old Testament book for Christians. Selections from the psalms are included almost every Sunday and are selected based upon being a congregational response to the first Reading

Second Readings

James—September 6, 13, 20, 27

James is primarily an exhortation to ethical conduct. Faith, if it is real, leads to faithful living. Christians are called to a faith that is not merely theoretical or abstract, but is acted upon, in every aspect of our daily lives. The author exhorts us to endurance, wisdom, confident prayer and faithful response to the word of God. Traditionally, the Church has seen the author of this book to have been James, the brother of Jesus our Lord

The Gospel

Mark—September 6, 13, 20, 27

As eye witnesses to the events of Jesus life and death became older, the need arose for a written synopsis. Tradition has it that Mark, while in Rome, wrote down what Peter told him about Jesus. Mark stresses the crucifixion and resurrection as keys to understanding who Jesus was. Almost one half of the book focuses on the events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Mark is most probably the *John Mark* mentioned in Acts 12:12 whose mother's house was a meeting place for followers of Jesus.

Some notes on the readings for September 6

Proverbs 22:1-2,8-9,22-23

A proverb is a concise statement expressing a truth in a way which is easy to remember. In today's selection, a scholar instructs a student in how to lead a moral life – a life in which God is given the respect due to God.

James 2:1-10,14-17

James has exhorted his readers to “be doers ... and not merely hearers” of the gospel. Now he tells them that favouring one person over another is inconsistent with believing in and following Jesus.

Mark 7:24-37

Jesus goes to a Gentile area. Even though his mission is primarily to the Jews, he heals the daughter of a Gentile woman who shows faith in him. Healing a man who is disabled in hearing and speech impresses the crowd that is following Jesus.

Background to scripture readings for Sunday September 13

Proverbs 1:20-33

Wisdom is personified, as a woman. In places in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is called Lady Wisdom. Wisdom tells those who have refused to listen to her advice that they will be without resources when disaster strikes.

James 3:1-12

James continues his exhortation regarding Christian conduct. He rebukes teachers for intemperate speech. He is a teacher himself and points out that the tongue, the instrument of the teacher, can be used for good or for evil.

Mark 8:27-38

Jesus mentions the upcoming events of Holy Week (his suffering and death) for the first time. He is the Messiah, anointed by God and expected by the Jewish people, but, contrary to their expectations, he is the Messiah who will suffer, be rejected by people, be killed, and rise again.

Background to scripture readings for Sunday September 20

Proverbs 31:10-31

The book of Proverbs concludes with a poem about a capable wife. Many of her qualities are those of wisdom herself. These verses are seen to be a summary of the book.

James 3:13-4:3,7-8a

James has told us that a sin commonly found in the church is intemperate speech. Another common church sin is arrogance. Avoiding arrogance requires praying for godly wisdom.

Mark 9:30-37

Jesus has told the disciples that he, the Son of Man, the Messiah, will suffer. Now he adds that he is to be betrayed and handed over to people who will treat him harshly.

Background to scripture readings for Sunday September 27

Esther 7:1-6,9-10,9:20-22

This event occurs in about 500 B.C. in Persia during the Exile. Haman the vizier has arranged for all Jews to be annihilated, but through the bravery of Esther, they are saved.

James 5:13-20

James expands on his thoughts about prayer and tells his readers that bringing those who deviate from God's ways back to God will be rewarded at the end of time.

Mark 9:38-50

Jesus accepts someone who restores people to spiritual health, even though he is not a disciple. Kindness to Jesus followers will be rewarded, but whoever shakes the faith of a fellow Christian will be condemned.