

## Seedling Group Questions for the week of September 9 – Lectionary 23B

The sermon for September 9 can be found at [www.saidanotherway.org](http://www.saidanotherway.org)

### Questions for opening up

What memories do you have of Sunday School growing up?

Who has been a role model in the faith for you?

### Read James 2:1-10, 14-17

What differences does James see between the poor and the rich? To what extent do you think those roles and descriptions are at play in our world today?

Martin Luther famously had big problems with James, especially verses 14 and 17, because it seemed to contradict his understanding that we are saved by grace through faith alone. How do you make sense of James' point? How might you re-phrase or unpack James' argument for someone who thinks it promotes the idea that a person can earn their salvation by works?

### Read Mark 7:24-37

Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis were all localities far outside the more Jewish areas of Galilee and Judea. Why do you think Jesus makes a point to go there?

Describe the Syrophenician woman's approach to Jesus. How do her posture and her response display her faith?

What are the differences between the two healings (the woman's daughter and the man who is deaf-mute)? How are they similar?

### Putting things together

Why does Phillip suggest that the Syrophenician woman makes a good role model for faith formation?

How often do religious (racial, etc.) outsiders make an impact on your faith?

Phillip suggests that "Be opened" is a goal (or model) for faith formation. What do you think he means? Does that work for you? How do you see it happening in our congregation?

### Making it personal

Phillip asks, "Is [faith formation] something that 'just happens,' or are there intentional practices and commitments you can undertake that nurture [the kind of faith that can involve you in God's healing of the world?]" How would you respond to him? If there are intentional practices and commitments, what would they be? Which ones work best for you?

### **Isaiah 35:4-7a**

<sup>4</sup>Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
“Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you.”

<sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
<sup>6</sup>then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
<sup>7a</sup>the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water.

### **James 2:1-10, 14-17**

<sup>1</sup>My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? <sup>2</sup>For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, <sup>3</sup>and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,” <sup>4</sup>have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup>Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup>Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

<sup>8</sup>You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>9</sup>But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

<sup>14</sup>What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? <sup>17</sup>So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

### **Mark 7:24-37**

<sup>24</sup>[Jesus] set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, <sup>25</sup>but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. <sup>26</sup>Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. <sup>27</sup>He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” <sup>28</sup>But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs

under the table eat the children's crumbs." <sup>29</sup>Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." <sup>30</sup>So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

<sup>31</sup>Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup>They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. <sup>33</sup>He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. <sup>34</sup>Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." <sup>35</sup>And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. <sup>36</sup>Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. <sup>37</sup>They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."