



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

DAY OF SERVICE WORSHIP RESOURCES

TEXTS

Isaiah 35:4-7a, James 2:1-17 and Mark 7:24-37

COMPONENTS:

- Prayers of Intercession
- Sermon notes
- Affirmation of Baptismal Vocation
- Blessing and Sending
- Annotated hymn ideas
- Offering Prayer

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Gathered together by the Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world and all in any need.

We thank you for this faith community and the many ways your work through Jesus Christ brings us healing, freedom and renewal. Bless all who worship here that we may be for each other and the world signs of your justice and peace.

God, in your mercy,
Receive our prayer.

Open us to the unexpected ways we meet you in our neighbors. We thank you for their gifts and for the ways they invite us into community. You who sent your son not to be served but to serve, teach us to follow in his footsteps of service and love.

God, in your mercy,
Receive our prayer.

Protect your creation and teach us to cherish it. We praise you for the [*local water*], [*crops*], and [*livestock/wildlife*] that all glorify you. Thank you for the ways they sustain us and for our place among them to tend and watch over what you have made.

God, in your mercy,
Receive our prayer.

Keep watch over our community and all in any need: all who suffer with illness of body or mind, addiction, grief, loneliness, hunger or despair, [*especially...*]. Be near in times of trouble and open our ears to hear the voices of your children.

God, in your mercy,
Receive our prayer.

For all that we ask in the silence of our hearts and all that you see we need,

God, in your mercy,
Receive our prayer.

Into your hands, Gracious God, we give all that we pray for, trusting in your compassion, through Jesus Christ our savior, **Amen.**

SERMON NOTES ON MARK 7:24-37

The two stories found in Mark's Gospel today may not seem to have much to do with a day of service: the Syrophenician woman boldly challenges Jesus' dismissal and her little daughter is healed, then Jesus goes on to heal another gentile by bringing a deaf man hearing and clear speech. We can find a key to the connection with service and neighbor though if we look at the one word in this passage that is highlighted by being written with its translation: "ephphatha," meaning "be opened." Through the lens of openness, this Gospel gives us multiple examples of ways to be open to our neighbors and models for the ways that we can bless and be blessed by service.

In verses 24-30, both the Syrophenician woman's persistence after Jesus insults her and Jesus' change of stance show a willingness to be open to and changed by a new relationship. Though initially either testing her or reluctant to heal a gentile, after their meeting Jesus expands his ministry more broadly to people who are unlike him. We similarly are often hesitant to expand our care and work outside of our own groups because, echoing Jesus' initial response, we fear that giving too freely may result in scarcity for ourselves. We also know that genuine engagement with people who are different from us may change our minds and lead us in new directions. In contrast to Jesus' initial words of scarcity and rigidity, the woman's response comes from understanding that with God there is enough for all. There was no question for her of whether God could care for both her daughter and the needs of Jesus' Jewish followers. She knew she had been presented with a false choice, and her faith is demonstrated in clearly stating that God is too abundant to be forced to choose one group of people at the expense of another. Her boldness and Jesus' commendation of her words witness to us that we do not need to be afraid that in expanding the circle of those for whom we care we will somehow miss out. Like her, we can rely on God's abundance and God's love for people across all human divides.

Then in the “opening” of the ears of the deaf man Jesus creates in this man’s life a new sort of awareness of and response to community. Though he was surrounded by people, the man’s ability to communicate with them was limited. His community pleads on his behalf, and Jesus responds by meeting precisely the need that he is requested to meet. Jesus trusts that the people who come to him for help know what they need, and he honors them by listening – the God who truly hears us in our needs, hears and responds to the Syrophenician woman’s challenge and gives this man the opportunity to begin to hear those around him. When we are given the grace to truly hear and truly speak to the people around us, we are drawn into and blessed by those relationships and are often called to service by the needs we begin to comprehend. Once we understand those needs, we respond for many reasons: We serve others because service teaches us to be like Jesus through practicing a Christlike openness to our neighbors. We serve because we have been blessed by God’s faithfulness and seek to respond in our own vocations with faithful living, and we also serve because in doing so we are blessed by the image of Christ in our neighbor. Today as you serve may your congregation be blessed by openness to relationships, abundance to give, grace to listen and energy to respond to all that the Spirit is calling forth in your communities. And may you hear most of all that Jesus’ work is good news to us. His openness to the needs of the Syrophenician woman and the deaf man extend also to our own needs for healing, abundance and a God who hears us. After all, no matter our own actions, the work of caring for the world remains God’s and we merely join in. We are blessed to be part of God’s work today, open to Jesus’ leading and the needs and gifts of our neighbors.

AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL VOCATION

(includes ELW p. 237 quoted below)

To be led from the font.

Creator God, we praise you for the waters of baptism that draw us daily into greater relationship with you and with all that you have made. Your heart is open to us in our struggles, you listen to us in any need, and you name us all as your beloved children. In your grace open our hearts also to serve as Christ served, so that we may follow where you lead and see the face of Christ in our neighbors.
Amen.

Beloved children of God, in your baptism “you have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

- to live among God’s faithful people,
- to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,
- to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
- to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
- and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.”

In these promises you have committed yourself to Christian vocation: to love and serve one another, share the good that God has done for you in word and deed, and follow in Jesus’ example

of service to all people. May God who has claimed you as beloved and holy in baptism, guide your words, your steps, your work and your rest for all of your days.

Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING

May God who has created you in rich community, to love, to learn, to share and to serve, be with you as you go out.

May God who meets you, in grace, in challenge, in beauty and in patience, greet you outside these walls.

And may God who walks with you, in water and wine, in friend and stranger, watch over you and bring you joy.

Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless and guide you today and always.

Amen.

ANNOTATED EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP HYMN IDEAS

ELW 538 The Lord Now Sends Us Forth

A sending hymn that clearly articulates our mission to go out “with hands to serve and give.” The lyrics are in both Spanish and English so you could sing in either or both!

ELW 546 To Be Your Presence

This sending song portrays an exuberant sense of mission in the world. The melody is simple and meant to be sung in unison and sounds joyful and energetic when sung boldly.

ELW 583 Take My Life, That I May Be

Another joyful song that enumerates some of the many ways we serve God while serving neighbor. This hymn could work in a variety of places in the service and also is printed in Spanish and English.

ELW 650 In Christ There Is No East or West

This hymn, adapted from an African American spiritual, emphasizes Christian unity and the ways our openness to one another is grounded in our shared identity as children of God.

ELW 679 For the Fruit of All Creation

Found in the “stewardship” section, this is a hymn of thanksgiving for God’s work and the ways we participate in it, especially through creation’s bounty but also through service and love.

ELW 708 Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

This hymn speaks of Christian vocation and service through Jesus' action of washing the disciples' feet and the example this sets for our lives. This could work well as the hymn of the day.

ELW 714 O God of Mercy, God of Light

This hymn could work well for a gathering song to set a tone of loving others as a mark of Christian vocation and discipleship. You may want to make sure to include the fifth stanza, since it speaks directly of service.

ELW 798 Will You Come and Follow Me

A lilting, conversational song portraying Jesus' call and our answer, this well-loved hymn is another good option for sending the congregation out into mission.

OFFERING PRAYER

Generous God, we thank you for your openness to our needs and your abundance in blessing us with these gifts. Receive what we now offer [*or this food/these quilts etc.*] that it [*or they*] may glorify you and sustain our neighbors in need. Bless these gifts, our hands and our hearts to your service. **Amen.**