

Sunday 26th September 2021

Trinity 17

"Whoever is not against us is for us."

Today's Gospel reading is from Mark's gospel (chapter 9, verses 38-50)

We stand whilst the Gospel is being read. If you are with us in the cathedral or church, try and join the responses when the Gospel is announced and following the reading. If you are watching our service online, you might like to do the same.

Listen to the gospel of Christ according to St Mark
Glory to you, O Lord.

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 afterwards 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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Not the easiest of readings to hear and understand – the later part reminds us that Jesus often used something called "hyperbole". You might like to "Google" this word to see how it is used and note that Jesus was a master of its use!

Today we are going to concentrate on the first paragraph of this Gospel reading.

Do you belong to a club? Perhaps you are a Scout, Guide or Brownie? Perhaps you are part of a sports club, a drama group, or a choir? Maybe our own cathedral choir? All of these clubs and groups do a lot of good and it's great to belong to something that does good things, isn't it?

The early followers of Jesus belonged to what they thought was a very special club – and it was! There were only twelve in that first group that followed Jesus. They felt very good about being part of Jesus's team. In Jesus's name, they healed sick people and taught them about the Kingdom of God. In our reading, we hear about the day when the disciples saw someone who wasn't a member of their group doing good things in Jesus's name. You would think they would be happy to see other people doing good things, but were they? No! They told them to stop what they were doing, because they weren't part of their special group.

The disciples thought Jesus would be pleased by their actions, so they went and told him what they had done. To their surprise, Jesus was not pleased. "Don't stop people who are doing good things in my name," Jesus said. "No-one who is doing good things in my name will then be able to turn around and say bad things about me. Anyone who is not against us is for us."

It's good to belong to a group, but it's especially good to be part of the family of God. The family of God is very large and there are many different groups who make up that family. Whenever we see anyone who is doing good in Jesus's name, we should not be jealous. We should rejoice and be glad, because "if they aren't against us, they are for us."

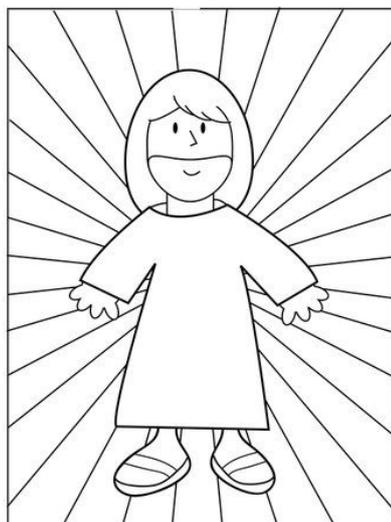
😊 Can you think of other people or groups working for the public good in your community, especially other churches and groups of Christians? They may do things differently from us, but we should celebrate what we are ALL doing, because we are all sharing in building the Kingdom of God. We pray for them all!

🙏 We are reminded how important prayer is in today's first reading from the Letter of James. Our wordsearch and colouring pages this week are based on this reading – I hope you were listening!

Our prayer for this week gives thanks for the kingdom-building work that all Jesus's followers are doing, in different ways:

🙏 Heavenly Father, we are thankful to be part of your family. Help us to rejoice and be glad when we see other members of your family doing good things. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Jesus hears all my prayers.



The Prayer of Faith

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16 (NIV)



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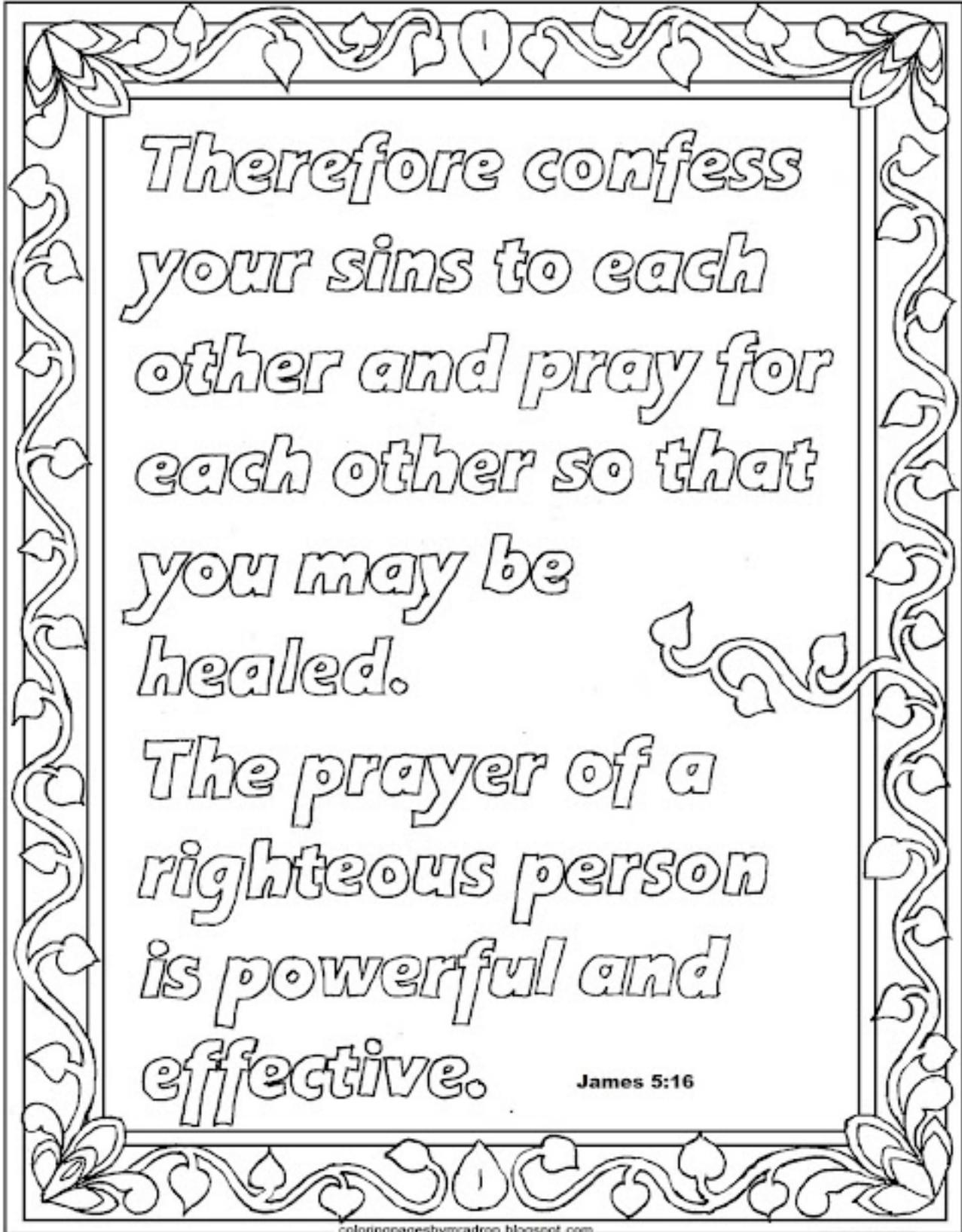
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James 5:16