

## PREPARING AT HOME

September 24-30, 2018

*Focus reading:* Mark 9:38–50 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=403249270>)

*Other lectionary readings:* Esther 7:1–6, 9–10; 9:20–22; Psalm 124; James 5:13–20

*Theme:* Getting Out of the Way

In Mark we see the geographical boundaries of Jesus' ministry being expanded. Those who were once on the outside are now included in Jesus' ministry. This week's reading gives us a look at some of the growing pains that have come with this expansion. More specifically, questions about who is "in" and who is "out" are surfacing. The disciples have witnessed Jesus casting out demons and have tried, sometimes unsuccessfully, to do the same. So, what are they to make of the fact that others who are unknown to them are casting out demons in Jesus' name? Jesus turns the focus away from the "outsider" who is ministering in his name back to the disciples themselves. He challenges them to redefine community to include any who are not opposing Jesus' ministry, even saying it would be better to die than to get in the way of someone's faith. How are we to understand the gruesome words about cutting off body parts? The metaphor of a social or political group being compared to a human body was common in Jesus' time. Perhaps Jesus is saying that those who do not welcome the "outsider" as part of the community should themselves be cut off from the group. As he often does, Jesus turns the question of who is "in" and who is "out" on its ear! Finally we are admonished to "Have salt . . . and be at peace with one another" (vs. 50). Persevere. Boldly live lives that make a difference, letting nothing get in the way of the welcome and peace that Christ offers to all!

### "IN" AND "OUT"

In your child's school or playgroup, who is "in" and who is "out"? Role play situations that may be familiar to your child: someone who is "out" asking if he or she can play with someone who is "in" or someone who is "in" deciding who to invite to a birthday party. Role play different endings. Talk about how each person in the role play would feel in each situation.

### AN ACT OF WELCOME

Identify someone who may feel excluded and one thing you could do to make that person feel welcomed and valued. Commit yourself to doing that one act. Check in with each other to talk about the experience.

### ADDING SALT

Taste something like popcorn or potatoes without salt and then with salt. What difference does the salt make? What might Jesus mean when he talks about having salt in our lives?

### PRAYER

Loving God,  
Forgive us when we treat others like outsiders.  
Help us to welcome others.  
Amen.

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