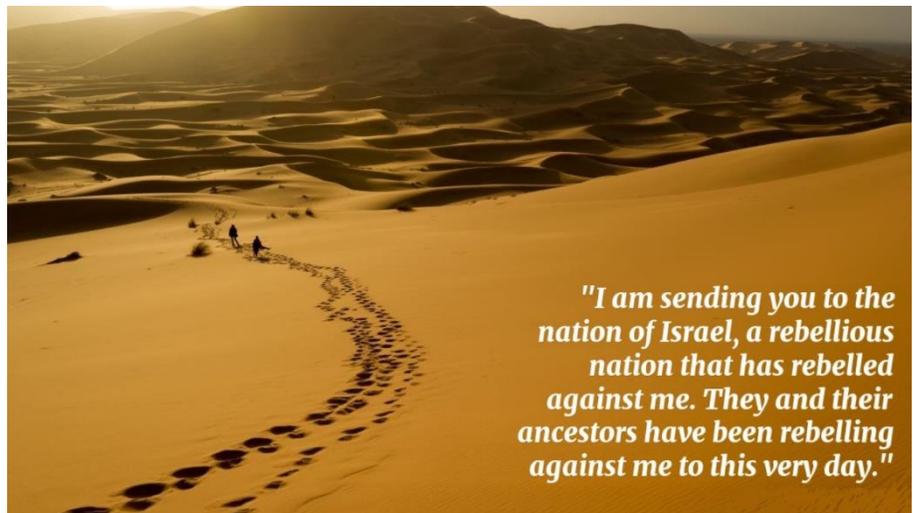


READING 1 – Ezekiel 2:2-5

***A reading from the Book of
the Prophet Ezekiel***

² As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

³ He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. ⁴ The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' ⁵ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.



RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 123: 1-2, 2, 3-4

**/R/ Our eyes are fixed on the Lord,
pleading for his mercy.**

To you I lift up my eyes
who are enthroned in heaven –
as the eyes of servants
are on the hands of their masters.

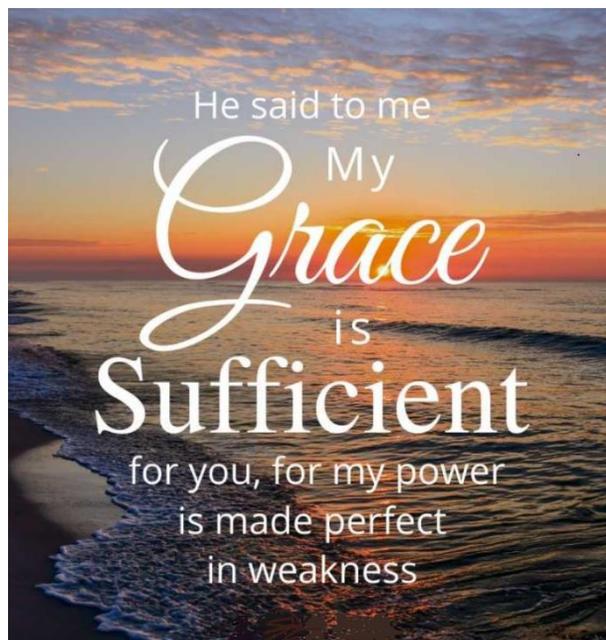
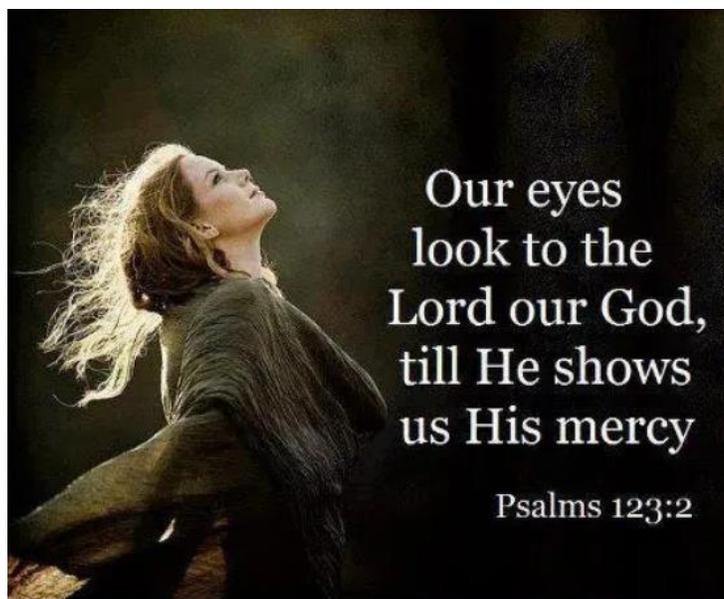
/R/

As the eyes of a maid
are on the hands of her mistress,
so are our eyes on the Lord, our God,
till he have pity on us.

/R/

Have pity on us, O Lord, have pity on us,
for we are more than sated with contempt;
our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant,
with the contempt of the proud.

/R/



READING 2 – 2 Corinthians 12:6-10

A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

⁶ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, ⁷ or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My

grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.



ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

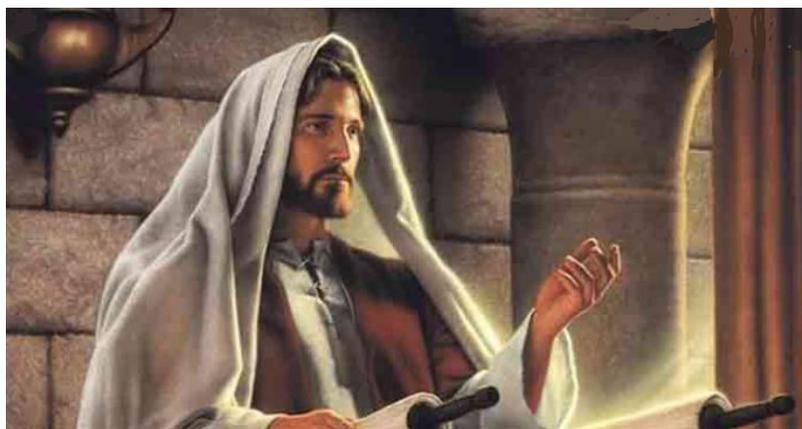
**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
For he sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor.**

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

GOSPEL – Mark 6:1-6

***A reading from the holy Gospel
according to Mark***

¹ Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.



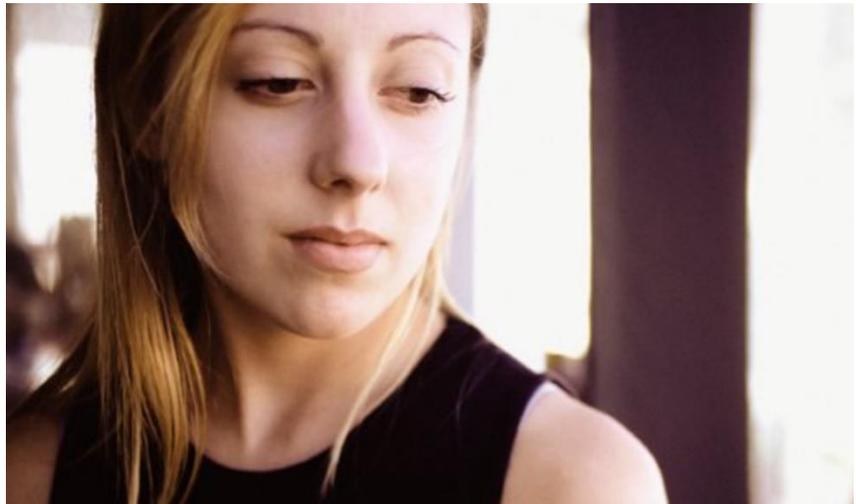
“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? ³ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this

Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

A PRAYER CONCERNING THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING (Job 12:5)

⁵ People who are at ease mock those in trouble. They give a push to people who are stumbling.



Dear God,
It is easy to analyze why other people struggle. It seems that I have all the answers to questions they never asked. I know that I mean well, but when I stop and reflect on it, I realize that my words likely inflicted even more serious wounds. All too often I find myself using phrases like, "If you just made better choices", or "If you ask me", or "I thought this would happen". It should come as no surprise to me that my friend soon finds a reason to cut the conversation short, and it becomes clear that a strain in our friendship has developed. In the Bible, Job's trial was unique. His friends assumed that he had offended God, and the heartbreak he was going through was payback for his improper deeds. Job defended his own innocence, but while he was down, his friends kicked a little harder and they pushed when he stumbled. However, when his friends first arrived, their actions were different. They just sat with Job and kept quiet. Teach me this important lesson, God, that there is a great benefit to being a friend who listens with compassion, but refuses to attempt to fix things unless help is truly requested. Help me understand that friends should never be left to struggle through difficult times on their own, but they also do not need my personally drafted five-step recovery program to fix all of the problems in their lives. Instill in me the desire to pray for those who must endure, help me listen quietly with love and understanding as they express their pain, and then allow you, God, to speak to them in my silence.

Amen

**A PRAYER CONCERNING THE TESTING
OF YOUR FAITH
(1 Peter 1:6-7)**

⁶ So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So, when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.



Dear God,

In this life, I sometimes feel that I am facing situations and problems that are simply bigger than I am, making me feel as if I have no answers or resources to continue on. Everything in me says, “Give up!”. When this happens, tell me not to do it! Teach me, instead, that I am in the midst of a faith test. Remind me that you are not punishing me, and that you have not forgotten about me – but rather, you are providing an opportunity for me to grow spiritually and to believe in you for greater things. Help me to make the decision to believe in you, Lord, in spite of everything. Guide me to look not at my circumstances or to pay attention to others – but instead, that I should place my entire focus on you.



Direct me to open your Word, and to trust completely the inspired words that I find in its pages. Help me understand and believe that you are using these adversities to teach me that Jesus is sufficient for every need that I might have. There is no challenge too overwhelming or pit too deep – he can always deliver me, regardless of the circumstances. Build my faith so that I will always trust you to be at my side as you faithfully demonstrate how you will resolve the worries and problems that trouble me.

Amen



Dear God, my best and closest friends come and go. They love with their best intentions, and with effort and strength. They are precious to me, but never can there be an earthly friend who knows me so well and loves me so thoroughly as you do. Thank you, Lord! Amen

**A PRAYER CONCERNING BEING
MADE PURPOSEFULLY
(Psalm 139:13-14)**

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful - I know that full well.



Dear God,
There are times, when I look at the people around me, that I wish I was more like someone else. I see their beauty, success, skill, or intelligence, and I find myself envying the gifts you gave them. I know that this is wrong – and I ask for your help. Help me embrace the person you made me to be, and to see my looks, gifts, culture, language, and everything about me as your purposeful and wonderful choices! Teach me that I am special! You gave me certain characteristics, personality, traits, talents, and aptitudes for a reason – for me to fulfill a unique role in history. And, when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, he gave me certain spiritual gifts to use in ministry, for his glory. Give me the confidence to believe that I am your beloved child who is “fearfully and wonderfully made”. Always remind me that no one has ever lived before, is alive now, or will be in the future who has been created just like me. Help me embrace and accept myself just the way you made me.



Amen



Dear God, thank you for forgiving me. It is a gift that I do not deserve. For that reason alone, it should be easy for me to offer forgiveness to others, but so often, it is a real challenge. I can say the words, but I know that those words have to be backed up by truth and love. Help me remember that when I forgive others, I am passing along a gift that I did not earn. Amen