

**READINGS AND REFLECTION FOR SUNDAY 21 JUNE 2020**  
**THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

**PSALM 86.1-10**

1 Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, ♦  
for I am poor and in misery.

2 Preserve my soul, for I am faithful; ♦  
save your servant, for I put my trust in you.

3 Be merciful to me, O Lord, for you are my God; ♦  
I call upon you all the day long.

4 Gladden the soul of your servant, ♦  
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

5 For you, Lord, are good and forgiving, ♦  
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

6 Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer ♦  
and listen to the voice of my supplication.

7 In the day of my distress I will call upon you, ♦  
for you will answer me.

8 Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord, ♦  
nor any works like yours.

9 All nations you have made shall come and worship you, O Lord, ♦  
and shall glorify your name.

10 For you are great and do wonderful things; ♦  
you alone are God.

## Collect

Lord, you have taught us  
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:  
send your Holy Spirit  
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,  
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,  
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.  
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Genesis 21.9-21**

8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. 10 So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." 11 The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. 13 As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." 14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15 When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. 18 Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. 20 God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. 21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

## Matthew 10.24-39

24 "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

26 "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

32 "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and one's foes will be members of one's own household. 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

*This is not an easy passage for us. Here are some brief notes to help, in addition to the week's Reflection, which follows:*

- Vs 24-25 Luke 11.14 ff tells us that some of Jesus's opponents accused him of acting in league with 'Beelzebul', or 'prince of demons'. Here he is speaking to the 12 disciples, and warns them if they said that sort of thing about him, their master, they're bound to catch it too, as they act in his name.
- Vs 26-27 Jesus is encouraging the 12 to be faithful, that ultimately what is good and true, and of the light, will be vindicated.
- Vs 28 Scholars have debated this vs, but I go with Tom Wright's interpretation – the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell is not God. This refers to the titanic powers of evil who try to tempt us – as they tempted Jesus – away from God's will and love.
- Vs 34-37 This sounds very hard and as if it contradicts everything we know about the Prince of Peace. But Jesus is saying his very coming is going to provoke conflict. Those who believe and follow him must make that commitment the centre of their lives. The 12 must be ready for what will come.
- Vs 38 The first mention of the cross in Matthew's Gospel.
- Vs 39 Our ultimate security in Christ.

## REFLECTION Mary-Lou writes ...

Here's a question for you: Which command is repeated most often in the Bible? You may already know this one, but don't worry if you don't, I'll give you the answer later!

In this week's Gospel reading, Jesus is talking to the 12 disciples he has chosen to go out and do in his name, some of what he has been doing. He needs to warn them what will happen, and there are some very serious warnings. If Jesus is treated badly by those who oppose him, his friends and followers can only expect the same treatment. And like Jesus himself, it may cost them their lives. But tucked into this passage are some treasures we can hold close to our hearts, whatever happens to us. First, Jesus says whatever the opponents do, '*Do not be afraid of them.*' Why? Because of the sparrows. Well, actually, because of God, of course.

Are you watching the birds? I find I spend quite a lot of time these days, just staring out of the window, looking and finding lots of little birds going about their business. Busy wrens, scuttling up and down the hedge at ground level. We have purposeful blue tits nesting in a shrub near the patio door, some busy sparrows, and then there are the fat pigeons trying to balance on the feeding station, pretending to be finches. We're blessed, we have a garden and there are lots of little birds around. That's actually what the Bible means by 'sparrows', all those little birds, birds that are worth nothing in terms of money, but who we discover are infinitely precious to their Creator. Isn't it wonderful? Jesus says of these little feathered wonders '*Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unseen by your Father.*' And the same Father – Jesus' Father, Our Father – even knows and counts all the hairs of our head! He goes on ... '*So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.*'

We are known and loved by God. Not just in a general kind of way, but intimately, personally. He just loves us, right down to the very hairs on our head! And whatever comes in life, however tough and dangerous it gets – we need not be afraid, we are held in that extraordinary love through it all, and into eternity. Jesus never says to those who believe in him that he brings some kind of magic protection that'll protect us from bad stuff happening, even the worst of things. But we need not be afraid! For if God sees every sparrow when it falls, how much more will he hold us who are of so much more value, in his Father's love, for ever.

Hair is a bit of an issue right now, isn't it?! But whatever yours looks like – mine's like candy floss! – when you brush it this week, remind yourself that every hair on your head is counted by your loving Father, he loves you that much. And whatever the week brings, you need not be afraid.

Oh, and what is the command repeated most often in the Bible? You may have guessed by now – three times we heard it. Do not be afraid!

May your loving heavenly Father bless you and keep you.