



COLLECT, READINGS & REFLECTION FOR SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER
The Last Sunday after Trinity

Collect

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 1

- 1 Blessed are they who have not walked
in the counsel of the wicked, ◆
nor lingered in the way of sinners,
nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.
- 2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord ◆
and they meditate on his law day and night.
- 3 Like a tree planted by streams of water
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither, ◆
whatever they do, it shall prosper.
- 4 As for the wicked, it is not so with them; ◆
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgement, ◆
nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, ◆
but the way of the wicked shall perish.

1 Thessalonians 2.1-8

1 You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. 3 For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; 6 nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, 7 though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. 8 So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

Matthew 22.34-46

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 42 "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." 43 He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 44 "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet" '? 45 If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" 46 No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Reflection – from Mary-Lou

One of my favourite tv programmes is '24 Hours in A&E'. If you haven't seen it, it does what it says on the tin! The programme takes us through just some of the stories of those who arrive at a big hospital in London in just one 24-hour period. Some of my nearest and dearest wonder at me watching this, because really I'm pretty squeamish. But when life has been demanding, I always find it brings balm for the soul, and my faith in the capacity for amazing goodness in human beings is restored. For at the heart of almost every story, there will be an outpouring of sheer love - love for someone else - as the families and friends of those in trouble accompany them through the drama of their injuries. When shock and fear strip away the certainties we rely on, love remains and holds us.

We are all created with the potential to love. In our Gospel this week, Jesus is faced with a group of Pharisees coming to him to test him on what is the heart of his teaching. Teacher, which commandment is the greatest? Christ's answer meets them on holy ground: Love the Lord your God with every bit of you, and love your neighbour as yourself. That's what all of Scripture boils down to. All of it. And in the rest of the passage I think it's as if Jesus is saying don't get caught up in the small print of your faith, you're narrowing your vision and you'll completely miss the point – for the Messiah was right there in front of them! The silence that followed this exchange was dramatic. It was very clear Jesus grasped the meaning far better than they did! As, later on, Cleopas suddenly understood when walking to Emmaus, scripture must be seen in his light. The light that shone from the cross. For God loved the world, that much. With Jesus, we are always being drawn forwards, deeper into the love and meaning of God, and he will use all our doubts and experiences of life to help us. We need not be afraid to question, for that is how we learn. And as we seek to learn, our love for God in Christ Jesus will grow and deepen, as we discover more of what it means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

But we must also be ready to be stretched, for our loving to be stretched. Jesus's teaching here challenges us always to live in loving ways, and not just to those we might call our nearest and dearest. In Jesus, we are asked to love beyond the usual boundaries, to our neighbour ... not just the person who lives next door, but those beyond, and especially those we may find it challenging to offer love to. Love that cares and acts when, for our neighbour, shock, fear, or circumstances beyond their control have stripped away all certainty and safety. Love in Christ is there for others when the chips are down and we can all be channels of his peace. And this love will never be exhausted. It never runs out! For the love we are given to share with others comes from our wonderful God, who loves each of us as if we were God's only child, and his love holds us into eternity.