



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 5 September 2021 – 14th Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God,
whose only Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence:
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Psalm 125

- 1 Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, ♦
which cannot be moved, but stands fast for ever.
- 2 As the hills stand about Jerusalem, ♦
so the Lord stands round about his people,
from this time forth for evermore.
- 3 The sceptre of wickedness shall not hold sway
over the land allotted to the righteous, ♦
lest the righteous turn their hands to evil.
- 4 Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, ♦
and to those who are true of heart.
- 5 Those who turn aside to crooked ways the Lord shall take away with the evildoers; ♦
but let there be peace upon Israel.

James 2.1-17

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet', have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, 'You shall not commit adultery', also said, 'You shall not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have

become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.]

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Mark 7.24-37

From there Jesus set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

Reflection from Peter

On the news the other day there was a wonderful report of a young man getting back on a horse for the first time since the lockdown. That's pretty exciting in itself, but this young man is both deaf and blind. He is able to ride the horse independently because of the wizardry of modern technology. His riding instructor is able to send signals to him that he can feel – and so respond and guide the horse where he needs to go. We all know that we take our senses for granted: we know it only too well as they start fading and we realise that seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting are gifts, gifts that transform our enjoyment of life. But, no matter how hard we try, we cannot hold on to them for ever. Today's Gospel gives us two extraordinary moments when Jesus encountered people in need. We cannot begin to guess what it meant to the Syrophenician woman – someone whose status denied her access to much that her neighbours took for granted - for her daughter to be healed; nor can we imagine what it meant for the deaf man to be able both to hear and to communicate simply and fully with others – though we note that the Gospel tells us nothing of his excitement, only of the celebrations of the crowd! The Gospel is then an invitation to us to imagine what life would be like when Jesus is able to embrace us fully and draw us into a world where sight and sound, touch, taste and smell are working perfectly, enabling us to understand and love God, ourselves and one another with a simplicity and clarity that is as yet unimaginable.