



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2021 – 15th Sunday after Trinity

COLLECT

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:
grant that your people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
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 19

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of God ♦
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 One day pours out its song to another ♦
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
- 3 They have neither speech nor language ♦
and their voices are not heard,
- 4 Yet their sound has gone out into all lands ♦
and their words to the ends of the world.
- 5 In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun, ♦
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.
- 6 It goes forth from the end of the heavens
and runs to the very end again, ♦
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart; ♦
the commandment of the Lord is pure
and gives light to the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦

the judgements of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.

- 10 More to be desired are they than gold,
more than much fine gold, ♦
sweeter also than honey,
dripping from the honeycomb.
- 11 By them also is your servant taught ♦
and in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can tell how often they offend ♦
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
- 13 Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me; ♦
so shall I be undefiled,
and innocent of great offence.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, ♦
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

James 3: 1-12

Taming the Tongue

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters,[Ⓜ] for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. **2** For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. **3** If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. **4** Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. **5** So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! **6** And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature,[Ⓜ] and is itself set on fire by hell.[Ⓜ] **7** For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, **8** but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **9** With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. **10** From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters,[Ⓜ] this ought not to be so. **11** Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? **12** Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters,[Ⓜ] yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Mark 8: 27-38

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

²⁷ Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' ²⁸ And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' ²⁹ He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' ³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Reflection from Hannah....

A number of years ago I was at a wedding. At the point in the ceremony when the priest asks for the rings and places them on the prayer book to be blessed, I had something of a shock. He wasn't using a book; he was using an iPad! And yet he still did the same thing. The rings were requested, were placed on the (rather precarious) smooth surface of the iPad, and he continued with the words of the blessing.

It was a deeply uncomfortable thing to watch, because it seemed to cross a line. A prayer book felt like a much safer object, being one that contained only the words used in Anglican worship. On the other hand, and alarmingly, the iPad had the potential to

contain anything. The whole world is in there! Just a short sequence of taps on the screen could have drawn up the most murky depths of the internet; images, perspectives, social-media posts, invitations that could speak another story and massively compromise the holy atmosphere of a marriage ceremony.

But part of the power of the Gospel passage this week is the context in which Jesus asks the question 'Who do you say that I am?' The disciples are away from the crowd, and heading towards Caesarea Philippi. That was a place where other ideologies reigned and pagan worship was rife. They were surrounded by all sorts of philosophies, world views and moral outlooks that were different to the ones they had been formed in. In a way, it was a bit like standing on the iPad! So as the disciples faced off that question of Christ's identity, they were in a place that was certainly well outside of their comfort zone.

The reference to Caesarea Philippi may make that obvious, but in fact it is always the case that our confession of Christ is uttered amidst competing voices. In a world so deeply disfigured, where we are constantly in the midst of pain, alienation and the terrible consequences of human fallibility, can we still provide an answer to that question 'Who do you say that I am?' It feels easy, appropriate even, to say that Jesus is the Messiah when we are surrounded by things that resonate with those words- our brothers and sisters in Christ, the church building, the scriptures, our worship texts.... But the reality is that we are called to proclaim it even when all around us seems to shout the opposite.

So though I doubt I will ever use an iPad at such a moment in my ministry (!), the mistake was mine. We are asked to name Jesus as Lord even as we stand in the worst the world has to offer. Despite the affront that it appears to be, those two rings atop a screen containing the whole internet, like the mention of Caesarea Philippi in our reading, can in fact help us to appreciate the true breadth, height, depth and width of the sovereignty of Jesus- the Messiah.