



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2021 – 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

**COLLECT**

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers  
of your people who call upon you;  
and grant that they may both perceive and know  
what things they ought to do,  
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;  
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 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.

## **James 3:13- 4:3, 7-8a**

### Two Kinds of Wisdom

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. <sup>16</sup> For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for<sup>o</sup> those who make peace.

### Friendship with the World

<sup>4</sup> Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet<sup>o</sup> something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

## **Mark 9: 30-37**

### Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

<sup>30</sup> They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; <sup>31</sup> for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

### Who Is the Greatest?

<sup>33</sup> Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' <sup>34</sup> But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> He sat down, called the twelve,

and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' <sup>36</sup> Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

### **A Reflection from Hannah...**

*'Grandmother sat in the magic forest and carved outlandish animals... her carvings became more and more numerous. They clung to trees or sat aside branches, they rested against the trunks or settled into the ground....*

*"What is it you're doing?" Sophia asked.*

*"I'm playing." Grandmother said.'*

This little excerpt is from *The Summer Book* by Tove Jansson (it happens to be my all-time favourite book, but that's not the point here!). In it, Signe (the grandmother) and Sophia (her granddaughter) have a close relationship, forged by their long summers playing together on a tiny Finnish island. Both of them recognise the value of what Christian tradition calls 'the sacrament of the present moment'- that is, the importance of embracing the here-and-now to the full.

And yet, as is often the case, Signe and Sophia are on the edges of society. Too old or too young, they are considered the unimportant ones. But there is something closer to our true humanity in simple stories of play and company- and that topsy-turvy truth is alluded to in our Gospel reading. There are a lot of egos jostling for position in the walk to Capernaum! The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest of them, and their embarrassment when Jesus calls them out is clear evidence that they knew full-well that it was not a good thing to be doing.

With his words, and with the example of a little child, Christ showed them and shows us that the concept of greatness is quite reversed in God's Kingdom. 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all, and servant of all' says Jesus. In God's economy, those most marginalised will be at the heart of the life of love; and have something to teach us all about Christ living in us.

So what does the world of a child show us about our true selves? In New Testament times, children were kept very much on the edges, expected to serve others and received little attention. In our time, things may seem different on the surface (we

definitely attend to our children!), but there still lurks that assumption that it is the adults that have the wisdom, learning and expertise to shape our lives together. Not so. In saying 'whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me' Christ is inviting us to receive that child in openness and vulnerability- greeting them as a human bearing God's image. And when we do that, we have an opportunity to embrace afresh the qualities that help us to be fully human too. Children can remind us about the importance of dependency on one another, of trust, of living in the moment and of play- all things that prompt us to remember what it is to live well as *God's* children, and to dare to let those characteristics grow and flourish.