



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2021 – 17th Sunday after Trinity

****Please note that Montford and Shrawardine have the Harvest readings this week:
Joel 2.21-27, Matthew 6.25-33****

COLLECT

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face; 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 124

- 1 If the Lord himself had not been on our side, ◆
now may Israel say;
- 2 If the Lord had not been on our side, ◆
when enemies rose up against us;
- 3 Then would they have swallowed us alive ◆
when their anger burned against us;
- 4 Then would the waters have overwhelmed us
and the torrent gone over our soul; ◆
over our soul would have swept the raging waters.
- 5 But blessed be the Lord ◆
who has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.
- 6 Our soul has escaped
as a bird from the snare of the fowler; ◆
the snare is broken and we are delivered.
- 7 Our help is in the name of the Lord, ◆
who has made heaven and earth.

James 5: 13-20

The Prayer of Faith

¹³ Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. ¹⁷ Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters,^[a] if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, ²⁰ you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's^[b] soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Mark 9: 38-50

Another Exorcist

³⁸ John said to him, 'Teacher, we saw someone^[a] casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.' ³⁹ But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ Whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

Temptations to Sin

⁴² 'If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me,^[b] it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell,^[c] to the unquenchable fire.^[d] ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.^{[e][f]} ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God

with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell,^[a] 48 where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

49 'For everyone will be salted with fire.^[b] 50 Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?^[c] Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.'

A reflection from Hannah (and Rowan Williams!)

James ends his letter with a call to prayer. After all that practical advice, all those challenging words, his final encouragement is that we should all pray for one another. If anyone is suffering or sick, then surround them in prayer. Then James makes the rather terrifying claim that 'the prayer of faith will save the sick'. Prayer has power, but we can often feel somewhat baffled by the whole question of how prayer works, why is sometimes doesn't 'appear' to do the trick, and the role our faith has play in the whole enterprise. This quote from Rowan Williams helps us to appreciate the mystery, and the need for prayers of faith:

'Intercession is... the prayer of faith...

... But what does it do? How does it work? These are inescapable questions, however crude, and quite unanswerable ones. We have one absolute instance of God's reconciling love at work in Jesus on the cross, and that is practically the only clue. It works in a man whose heart is open to God and to all the world, so open that it is broken to death. And our Christian growth must be constantly enlarged in sensitivity to the world's suffering and sensitivity to the victorious mercy of God. It means that our eyes have to be fully open to the world, to see its dereliction and hopelessness, its 'Godlessness'; and it is only through such open hearts that God can work. When selfishness and greedy manipulation are set aside, and insensitivity and complacency are overcome, then there is an empty space for the wind of the Spirit to blow through. That is all we can know. If prayer 'works', it is because of lives that have been crucified with Christ.'

Our friendship with Jesus enables us to come before the throne of God with open hearts- carrying both the crosses the world bears in agony, and the resurrection promise. As we pray, we call on God's kingdom to break into the darkness, and bring us light and peace. We may not ever know or understand what difference our prayers make, but we make them nevertheless because God promises to be very near to those who draw near to God. Heaven and earth meet when we call on the name of the Lord- one foot firmly planted in our longing and sadness, and one foot in the place of healing and hope. As one writer puts it, prayer brings the latter to bear on the former. So let's pray for one another, and for all that ails this old world. Amen.