



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 3 OCTOBER 2021 – 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

**\*Please note that Leaton, Albrighton and Bicton have the Harvest readings this week: Joel 2.21-27, Matthew 6.25-33\***

**COLLECT**

Almighty and everlasting God,  
increase in us your gift of faith  
that, forsaking what lies behind  
and reaching out to that which is before,  
we may run the way of your commandments  
and win the crown of everlasting joy;  
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 26**

- 1 Give judgement for me, O Lord,  
for I have walked with integrity; ♦  
I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.
- 2 Test me, O Lord, and try me; ♦  
examine my heart and my mind.
- 3 For your love is before my eyes; ♦  
I have walked in your truth.
- 4 I have not joined the company of the false, ♦  
nor consorted with the deceitful.
- 5 I hate the gathering of evildoers ♦  
and I will not sit down with the wicked.
- 6 I will wash my hands in innocence, O Lord, ♦  
that I may go about your altar,
- 7 To make heard the voice of thanksgiving ♦  
and tell of all your wonderful deeds.
- 8 Lord, I love the house of your habitation ♦  
and the place where your glory abides. [R]
- 9 Sweep me not away with sinners, ♦  
nor my life with the bloodthirsty,
- 10 Whose hands are full of wicked schemes ♦

and their right hand full of bribes.

11 As for me, I will walk with integrity; ♦  
redeem me, Lord, and be merciful to me.

12 My foot stands firm; ♦  
in the great congregation I will bless the Lord.

## Hebrews 1: 1-4; 2: 5-12

### God Has Spoken by His Son

**1** Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,<sup>[a]</sup> whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. **3** He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains<sup>[b]</sup> all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

### Exaltation through Abasement

**5** Now God<sup>[a]</sup> did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. **6** But someone has testified somewhere,

'What are human beings that you are mindful of them,<sup>[b]</sup>  
or mortals, that you care for them?<sup>[c]</sup>

**7** You have made them for a little while lower<sup>[d]</sup> than the angels;  
you have crowned them with glory and honour,<sup>[e]</sup>

**8** subjecting all things under their feet.'

Now in subjecting all things to them, God<sup>[a]</sup> left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, **9** but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower<sup>[d]</sup> than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God<sup>[a]</sup> he might taste death for everyone.

**10** It was fitting that God,<sup>[a]</sup> for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. **11** For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father.<sup>[a]</sup> For this reason Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> **12** saying,

'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup>  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.'

## Mark 10: 2-16

<sup>2</sup> Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' <sup>3</sup> He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' <sup>4</sup> They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' <sup>5</sup> But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." <sup>7</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

<sup>10</sup> Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup> He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup> and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

### Jesus Blesses Little Children

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' <sup>16</sup> And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

### A reflection from Hannah....

For this week's reflection, let's just concentrate on the opening words from Hebrews:

'Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,<sup>[a]</sup> whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.'

God spoke. These opening lines remind us of at least two other places in scripture where God spoke. One is the Creation Poem- where we hear that refrain 'God said'- and things happen. The other place is the beginning of John's Gospel, most beloved of our Christmas readings, where we hear those magnificent lines 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

The resonance is deliberate. The writer of Hebrews is casting for us the big picture- the story of God's love was already present in the beginning of all that is. But the word 'spoke' loses something of its breadth in translation. The Greek is 'logos'; the Old Testament Hebrew is 'dabar'. Both mean more than just a spoken (or written) word. They mean word in action, word that changes things, word that has power and consequences. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Jerome translated John 1 as 'In the beginning was the *verb*.' An action word! Maybe that helps us a little bit to understand the height, breadth and depth of what happens when God speaks.

And God spoke through many people in ancient times. Prophets were feared precisely because their word from God had a momentum and a potential that was divine. But in Jesus, once and for all, it is different. We arrive at the very embodiment of the Word. Prophets passed messages on, but Jesus Christ *is* the Word of God. As one writer puts it:

'Jesus' whole life was to be a human utterance of the word, will, purpose and intent of God. The people of God, by and large, had failed to absorb and live by the Word of God; now it was time for the word to step out of the pages, and insist on a hearing.'

As the next verse in Hebrews attests, Jesus is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being. In our Gospel reading, as ever, we get glimpses of what that looked like during his earthly life- the Word in action. In this case it's the glorious yet profoundly challenging things Christ had to say about the depth of the marriage union, and the place of children (so often overlooked) in God's kingdom.

So where does that leave us today? When we understand the richness of the Word, when we recognise that there is power and transformation behind the simple phrase 'God spoke', we are invited to appreciate that the bible is so much more than words on a page that just tell us about something that happened. The astonishing thing that disciples then and now have realised, is that Jesus still speaks today- and when he does, there are consequences. When we call on the name of Jesus, his Word works through us, and brings life, light, change and joy to those around us. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus' words still pour forth to bless, heal and reconcile the whole of creation. To finish, here is a poem by Charles Péguy, which makes the same point:

*Jesus did not give us dead words  
For us to salt away in little tins  
(or big ones)  
For us to preserve in rancid oil.  
Jesus Christ, my girl,  
Did not give us word-pickles to keep.  
No, he gave us living words...  
The words of life...  
On us, weak creatures of the flesh, it depends  
To keep these words uttered in time alive,  
To feed them and keep them alive in time.*

May God's Word live in and through us today. Amen.