



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER 2021 – 20th Sunday after Trinity

COLLECT

God, the giver of life,
whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ
and make us eager to do your will,
that we may share with the whole creation
the joys of eternal life;
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 104: 1-10, 26, 35

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul. ♦
O Lord my God, how excellent is your greatness!
- 2 You are clothed with majesty and honour, ♦
wrapped in light as in a garment.
- 3 You spread out the heavens like a curtain ♦
and lay the beams of your dwelling place in the waters above.
- 4 You make the clouds your chariot ♦
and ride on the wings of the wind.
- 5 You make the winds your messengers ♦
and flames of fire your servants.
- 6 You laid the foundations of the earth, ♦
that it never should move at any time.
- 7 You covered it with the deep like a garment; ♦
the waters stood high above the hills.
- 8 At your rebuke they fled; ♦
at the voice of your thunder they hastened away.
- 9 They rose up to the hills and flowed down to the valleys beneath, ♦
to the place which you had appointed for them.
- 10 You have set them their bounds that they should not pass, ♦
nor turn again to cover the earth.
- 26 O Lord, how manifold are your works! ♦
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 35 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; ♦
I will make music to my God while I have my being.

Hebrews 5: 1-10

⁵ Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³ and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

'You are my Son,
today I have begotten you';

⁶ as he says also in another place,

'You are a priest for ever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.'

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus[Ⓜ] offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹ and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰ having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Mark 10:35-45

The Request of James and John

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' ³⁶ And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' ³⁷ And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' ³⁹ They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

A reflection from Hannah...

There is something deeply refreshing about the warts-and-all nature of Mark's Gospel! In Matthew's Gospel, written later, it is Salome (the mother of James and John) who makes the request for them to sit with Jesus in his glory. Perhaps by then, something of the reverence in which those first disciples were held meant that writers and story-tellers put some distance between them and their rather flawed questions.

But Mark's account doesn't do that. The question is placed in the mouths of James and John themselves- and they face the consequences. They ask to sit, one at Jesus' right hand and one at his left, in his glory. It is a classic understanding of power, of influence and of the reflective glory that they hope their closeness to Jesus will bring. But they are thinking of greatness in worldly terms only. Christ turns that understanding on its head. He cannot grant them their request because it is not in his gift. Indeed, the original ending of Mark's Gospel did not include any resurrection stories, so when 'glory' is mentioned in this Gospel, it is describing Jesus' death. As we know, two thieves 'sat' one at his right, and one at his left when he was crucified- which is, though it's hard for us to swallow, an image of glory.

But though the request cannot be granted, what Jesus does do is use this episode as an opportunity to help the disciples, then and now, to understand what being a follower means. It means a life lived in the pattern of Christ- as the scripture puts it, drinking his cup and being baptised by his baptism. It is not an easy path, and it may lead to shame, ridicule and injustice- it may lead to the cross. Indeed, it is the very opposite of an earthly understanding of being in the orbit of the Son of Man. It's no surprise then, that when the hour of his death came, suddenly most of the disciples were nowhere to be seen.

But the way Jesus offers us is the only way that is truly free. As he points out, rulers use their power to manipulate and subjugate, but not so with Christ. His rule is that of a servant, and we are invited to too to be servants of all. There is a connotation of liberation with the word 'ransom', used at the very end of this passage. Through the servanthood of Christ we find freedom, and we are shown what 'glory' in God's Kingdom really looks like.