



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 16 JUNE 2024 - TRINITY 3

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
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.

Psalm 92.1-4,12-15

- 1 It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord ♦
and to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
- 2 To tell of your love early in the morning ♦
and of your faithfulness in the night-time,
- 3 Upon the ten-stringed instrument, upon the harp, ♦
and to the melody of the lyre.
- 4 For you, Lord, have made me glad by your acts, ♦
and I sing aloud at the works of your hands.
- 12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, ♦
and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.
- 13 Such as are planted in the house of the Lord ♦
shall flourish in the courts of our God.
- 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; ♦
they shall be vigorous and in full leaf;
- 15 That they may show that the Lord is true; ♦
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Ezekiel 17.22-24

Thus says the Lord God:

I myself will take a sprig

from the lofty top of a cedar;

I will set it out.

I will break off a tender one

from the topmost of its young twigs;

I myself will plant it

on a high and lofty mountain.

On the mountain height of Israel

I will plant it,

in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit,

and become a noble cedar.

Under it every kind of bird will live;

in the shade of its branches will nest

winged creatures of every kind.

All the trees of the field shall know

that I am the Lord.

I bring low the high tree,

I make high the low tree;

I dry up the green tree

and make the dry tree flourish.

I the Lord have spoken;

I will accomplish it.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from Mark, chapter 3, verses 20-35.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home in you; through him, give thanks to God the Father.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 4, verses 26-34.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Mark 4.26-34

Jesus also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

A Reflection from Peter...

Think for a moment of the kind of blurb you get from estate agents: 'designed for flexible living..., light-filled spaces..., far-reaching views...' – vague appeals to our emotional and affective instincts, and, usually, not really concerned with the practical. Indeed, the whole approach can be about creating a picture in our heads that may turn out to have nothing to do with the reality of a rather cramped house that looks out on to a railway line and requires the kind of flexibility that enables you to squeeze into awkward spaces!

Jesus and Ezekiel alike are drawing pictures for us – but they are very different. Both are concerned with function, with being useful and productive. Jesus produces two examples. First, he talks of the experience of sowing seed. It is, as we all know, an imprecise science. And, as the Gospel puts it, if asked to give an account, the sower "does not know how" it happens – but it does. (Of course, experience teaches the sower a lot about planting, but even a lifetime's learning doesn't enable the sower to know for certain what the success or failure of a crop will be.) And then Jesus talks about the mustard seed: tiny in itself, yet producing a tree big enough to provide lodging space for birds.

The two points that Jesus emphasises are both important. First, someone else is at work here. Jesus is speaking of the kingdom of God. In the way that he speaks there are things that are beyond our capacity to understand, things that suggest something of the otherness of God, the hand of God at work. Secondly, this kingdom that he speaks of is not to be understood as a super version of the Roman Empire, or of a completely renewed, liberated Jewish state, or of a perfect European Union, for that matter. It is God's space and here the concerns are different. God provides the right space for everyone; provides enough nutrition to enable the growth of everyone and everything to reach its full potential; and it is a co-operative space – a space where we naturally and generously want to reach out to others and make room for them too.

As we ponder on the new world, the kingdom, that God is constantly bringing into being, we pray more urgently for the values of that kingdom to begin to reshape the present landscape. How much better for us all if we could learn how to make room for the other, to be reconciled with those we are inclined to dismiss as wrong, and to discover that underlying interconnected dependence that is a consequence of being creatures in God's world.