



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 14 JULY 2024- TRINITY 7**

COLLECT

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
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 85. 8-13

- 8 I will listen to what the Lord God will say, ♦
for he shall speak peace to his people and to the faithful,
that they turn not again to folly.
- 9 Truly, his salvation is near to those who fear him, ♦
that his glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Mercy and truth are met together, ♦
righteousness and peace have kissed each other;
- 11 Truth shall spring up from the earth ♦
and righteousness look down from heaven.
- 12 The Lord will indeed give all that is good, ♦
and our land will yield its increase.
- 13 Righteousness shall go before him ♦
and direct his steps in the way.

Amos 7.7-15

This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. And the LORD said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb-line.' Then the Lord said, 'See, I am setting a plumb-line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass them by;
the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.'

Amaziah Complains to the King

Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, 'Amos has conspired against you in the very centre of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land." '

And Amaziah said to Amos, 'O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.'

Then Amos answered Amaziah, 'I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

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 6, verses 14-29.

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.**

My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord. I know them, and they follow me.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 6, verses 14-29.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Mark 6.14-29

The Death of John the Baptist

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, 'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.' But others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.' But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.' And he solemnly swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What should I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the baptizer.' Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

A Reflection from Hannah...

'I didn't mean it to come to this'. Perhaps many of us have found ourselves living with the unintended consequences of something we've said or done? That's the place Herod is in with John the Baptist, in our Gospel reading. This whole passage pre-empts and forewarns us of the circumstances in which Jesus will die. It also enriches our understanding of the more harrowing possibilities that discipleship can bring- remember, just before this passage the twelve have been sent out in pairs to cast out demons and to heal, all in God's power. It's perhaps a little easier to see why Jesus advised them at length about how to respond to a lack of welcome, when we appreciate in the story of John's death just how hard it can be for people to receive and embrace God's message.

John the Baptist is imprisoned because he spoke out about Herod and Herodias' adulterous behaviour. As a consequence, Herodias simply reviles him. But Herod's attitude to John is a lot more interesting- we read that he 'feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him.' Something in John the Baptist drew Herod's interest- and had John lived, Herod's story might also have been very different. This complex relationship with the truth of God's love is one we still find today; people can be intrigued, interested, hungry for more; but also cautious and, frankly, baffled. When we find that- in others, and in ourselves too, last week's passage about greeting rejection with peace can help us have a healthy approach, and Herod's (initial) strategy to keep John's company (albeit in chains) is likewise an encouragement.

But sadly, for Herod, he was too easy to manipulate, and this had tragic consequences. His need to keep up a good public face won out. A similar thing would happen again with Pilate, when he washed his hands of Jesus and let him be condemned to death. Like Herod, he didn't particularly want to kill a wandering preacher from the Jewish community; but also like Herod, circumstances conspired to manipulate him into using his authority to destroy goodness.

The world hasn't changed much- we may think that it's big and obvious and clear decisions that lead to awful injustices, but so often it is many small human weaknesses that combine in unfortunate and unforeseen ways to diminish God's good creation. And how does God respond? Well, God in Christ goes to the depths and is not defeated. As Paul notes the letter to the Corinthians, 'With all wisdom and insight God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.' Though terrible things continue to happen, there is no darkness that can extinguish that hope.