



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2024- TRINITY 14**

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose only Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence:
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
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 15

- 1 Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle? ♦
Who may rest upon your holy hill?
- 2 Whoever leads an uncorrupt life ♦
and does the thing that is right;
- 3 Who speaks the truth from the heart ♦
and bears no deceit on the tongue;
- 4 Who does no evil to a friend ♦
and pours no scorn on a neighbour;
- 5 In whose sight the wicked are not esteemed, ♦
but who honours those who fear the Lord.
- 6 Whoever has sworn to a neighbour ♦
and never goes back on that word;
- 7 Who does not lend money in hope of gain, ♦
nor takes a bribe against the innocent;
- 8 Whoever does these things ♦
shall never fall.

Deuteronomy 4.1-2, 6-9

Moses Commands Obedience

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!' For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

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 7, verses 1-8, 14, 15, 21-23.

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.**

Your word is truth, O Lord: consecrate us in the truth.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 7, verses 1-8, 14,15, 21-23.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Mark 7.1-8,14,15,21-23

The Tradition of the Elders

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.' For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

A Reflection from Hannah...

There is a very joy-filled atmosphere at the Steam Rally. When I was there this past Monday, my sister and I both noticed how it felt so much lighter than many other attractions, and yet it's hard work to put together, a huge undertaking that requires so much careful preparation and so much attention to safety. You would think that would make it really stressful! And yet, the sheer delight on the faces of the people chugging around in these old engines, cars, lorries and bikes is just wonderful. We concluded that the reason it's a nice place to be is that all the exhibitors *love* what they are doing. They are bringing their treasures to share, simply because they want to.

In other words, at the Steam Rally we see people who are living from the heart. And that helps us to understand a bit about today's reading from Mark's Gospel, in which Jesus calls out the pharisees and the scribes for being hypocrites because they are only concerned with appearances and not with what is really going on inside people. We all have a radar for this- at the Steam Rally, we appreciate the genuine sentiment that people are bringing. On the other hand, we've all had that experience of being utterly unconvinced by someone's presentation- they may be smiling and saying all the right things, but we can instantly tell if they don't really mean it. One of the places where I feel most sorry for people forced into this position is at the checkout at Sainsbury's, where there is a script that the cashiers have to go through to ask the customer about their day, their wellbeing and what they are doing next- it can sometimes be excruciatingly clunky! We know when it's 'all about appearances', and that can feel fake and disappointing.

And Jesus explains why. The reality of love comes freely from within us- it begins in the depths of our being. What is on the inside is what matters, not what we choose to show, and not the traditions that we can get so obsessed by. This isn't to say that traditions, rituals, conventions don't matter; the point is that they can be misunderstood as having a meaning that's just not there. The challenge for us today is the same- are we guilty of 'honouring with our lips' but keeping our hearts closed to the love of God? As Christ reminds us, saying all the right things, knowing all the 'correct' ways doesn't bring about good, and not doing them doesn't bring about evil- both begin on the inside.

In the church that's next to our family's home in Austria, there is a window that says 'My soul magnifies the Lord'. You probably recognise it as the beginning of the Song of Mary. This year, it kept calling my attention. Part of the reason perhaps lies in this interplay between what's on the outside and what's on the inside. I am reminded that it is 'my soul' that worships God- not 'my surface'! In other words, our prayer and our longing is to be people who remember that- who don't worship on the surface only, but who, in the depths of our souls, sing that song of love and watch it grow.

