



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 8 September 2024 - TRINITY 15

COLLECT

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:
grant that your people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel
that, always abiding in you,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
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 146

- 1 Alleluia. Praise the Lord, O my soul: while I live will I praise the Lord; ♦
as long as I have any being, I will sing praises to my God.
- 2 Put not your trust in princes, nor in any human power, ♦
for there is no help in them.
- 3 When their breath goes forth, they return to the earth; ♦
on that day all their thoughts perish.
- 4 Happy are those who have the God of Jacob for their help, ♦
whose hope is in the Lord their God;
- 5 Who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; ♦
who keeps his promise for ever;
- 6 Who gives justice to those that suffer wrong ♦
and bread to those who hunger.
- 7 The Lord looses those that are bound; ♦
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind;
- 8 The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; ♦
the Lord loves the righteous;
- 9 The Lord watches over the stranger in the land; he upholds the orphan and widow; ♦
but the way of the wicked he turns upside down.
- 10 The Lord shall reign for ever, ♦
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Alleluia.

A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah, Chapter 35, verses 4 – 7a.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

‘Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.’

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water.

Isaiah 35.4-7a

For the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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 John, chapter 6, verses 56-69

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.**

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 6, verses 56 - 69

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Mark 7.24-37

Jesus went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

A Reflection from Peter...

Today we are reminded of one of the fundamental characteristics of all faith traditions; something that is most especially true of our Christian faith. Life as creatures in this world is never fully in our control. Lots of things happen – some good, some bad, some neither specially good nor specially bad – they just happen. We can do little about it. All those conversations about the weather: there's a great example!

A life of faith always includes looking beyond the immediate. One aspect of the appeal of Harry Potter, or of much science fiction, is the evoking of other worlds almost, but not quite, within our grasp. Nothing does that better than the hidden platform at Kings Cross station where the train to Hogwarts awaits.

Our first reading has something very similar. The people of Israel have suffered much, but, the prophet says, "Here is your God – he will come and save you." And he goes on to picture a world that is both like and unlike our own: waters shall break forth in the wilderness, the burning sand shall become a pool. It is familiar – just as platform 9^{3/4} is both familiar and unfamiliar.

The Gospel reading also opens doors of hope. Here we see Jesus meeting the Syrophenician woman. She is already at a disadvantage. She is a gentile, an outsider. And Jesus, at first, behaves just as she expects him to. She has dared to come and ask healing for her daughter, but Jesus dismisses her request saying, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." At this point you feel she must have had to deal with this kind of response before! She replies instantly, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." And Jesus opens a door into a new world of hope for her as he heals her daughter.

And what might we take from this? In the first reading from Isaiah it seems as though God does all the work. The prophet tells us that God is creating a new world; we just have to wait for it. But the Gospel reading is different. Here, the key moment is the encounter between Jesus and the woman. She has come to him in hope. At first her hope seems to be dashed, but she persists – and Jesus opens the door wide, creating the best possibility she could imagine. We surely recognise something of this in our own faith life. If we have no expectation of anything much then nothing much happens! But living in the faith and hope that God is at work 'reconciling the world to Godself' stirs up hope in us. In all our encounters with the living God we are encouraged to go on seeking the new, the restored, the re-created, and we are set free from the despondency that so easily overwhelms us when life is tough.