



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 22 September 2024 - TRINITY 17

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
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 54

- 1 Save me, O God, by your name ♦
and vindicate me by your power.
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God; ♦
give heed to the words of my mouth.
- 3 For strangers have risen up against me,
and the ruthless seek after my life; ♦
they have not set God before them.
- 4 Behold, God is my helper; ♦
it is the Lord who upholds my life.
- 5 May evil rebound on those who lie in wait for me; ♦
destroy them in your faithfulness.
- 6 An offering of a free heart will I give you ♦
and praise your name, O Lord, for it is gracious.
- 7 For he has delivered me out of all my trouble, ♦
and my eye has seen the downfall of my enemies.

A reading from the prophecy of Jeremiah, Chapter 11, verses 18-20.

Jeremiah 11.18-20

Jeremiah's Life Threatened

It was the Lord who made it known to me, and I knew;
then you showed me their evil deeds.

But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.

And I did not know it was against me
that they devised schemes, saying,
'Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
so that his name will no longer be remembered!'

But you, O Lord of hosts, who judge righteously,
who try the heart and the mind,
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

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 Mark, chapter 9, verses 30-37.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel. Everywhere except Fitz introduces it with an Acclamation (the blue bit), and then we all use the introduction and ending (the green bit):

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 Mark, Chapter 9, verses 30-37.

Glorify to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Mark 9.30-37

Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Who Is the Greatest?

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

A Reflection from Hannah...

There are certain people who always 'win' the 'you first' battle! You may be one, or you may know one. They are the people who insist *you* go first in the queue for the buffet, and won't take no for an answer. They are the people who always stand to let someone else sit down on the bus. They are the people who remember to offer the biscuits *before* taking one for themselves. They are the people who hold the door and only go through once everyone else has.

They are indeed amazing people! Full of kindness and care for others, and a real blessing to be around. In our Gospel reading this week, we hear about the value of service in God's economy. The disciples have been having an 'I'm the best!' discussion/ argument/ frank exchange of views, and they know it was not an honourable activity. They are (like children often are) silent at first, when Jesus wants to know what they've been talking about. Embarrassed, ashamed.

And that's what leads to Christ explaining what really matters in God's Kingdom- a servant heart. 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all, and servant of all'. So what does that look like in practice? Without the rest of the passage to help us understand the nuance of these words, we run the risk of assuming that servant heartedness is simply about being last in the queue- very much like the type of person I've described above. A set of situations which, by the way, would descend into comedy farce if everyone insisted on being last- the buffet would go uneaten, the bus would be full of standing passengers and empty seats, the biscuits would go stale and the door would be open with a gaggle of people on one side only, refusing to go through it!

Of course servant heartedness includes saying 'you first' to others, but it is by no means the whole story. Christ goes on to give the example of a child, and says 'whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me'. What does this mean? Well, it's a reminder that all human life is full of dignity and bears the image of Christ. Even children- who in that society were largely ignored... or worse. Servant heartedness is about noticing the humanity in everyone- whether or not the world ascribes them any status. For us that of course includes children, who are complete as they are, of equal worth with any adult, and often have an instinctive faith and trust in God. It also includes those we would consider 'outsiders'- the people who risk everything to get across the channel, the street-sleepers in the town centre, those whose views we may find abhorrent, those who are vulnerable... the list goes on.

And of course, in placing this passage straight after talk of betrayal, killing and rising, we are also reminded that servanthood in the pattern of Jesus is cross-shaped. There will be suffering, there will be injustice, but the end of all things is life- which enables us to live as people of hope, joyfully serving one another in a continuation of that love which sustains our every breath, and flows from the servant heart of Christ.