



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER 2024 – Last of Trinity/ Bible Sunday

COLLECT

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 19.7-14

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple.
8 The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart; ♦
the commandment of the Lord is pure
and gives light to the eyes.
9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦
the judgements of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
more than much fine gold, ♦
sweeter also than honey,
dripping from the honeycomb.
11 By them also is your servant taught ♦
and in keeping them there is great reward.
12 Who can tell how often they offend ♦
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
13 Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me; ♦
so shall I be undefiled,
and innocent of great offence.
14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, ♦
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

A reading from the book of Isaiah, Chapter 55, verses 1-11.

Ho, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labour for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.
See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found,
 call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way,
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
 and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
 giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
 it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
 and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

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 5, verses 36b-47.

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 John, Chapter 5, verses 36b-47.

Glorify to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

John 5.36b-47

The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?'

A Reflection from Hannah...

As a young adult I had a 'Mary Webb' phase. In some obscure village hall in south Shropshire, the Mary Webb society put on a showing of the film *Gone to Earth* and I eagerly went along. It was made in 1950, so was already ancient when I watched it in the mid-nineties! My dad couldn't stop giggling at the clumsy (and inexplicable) insertion of the Wrekin behind Ludlow Fair, but my problem was bigger. The lead character, Hazel Woodus, was supposed to have red hair. It was key to the grand metaphor of the storyline because she represented a fox. This Hazel had jet black hair- probably because casting Jennifer Jones was more important than staying true to the tale!

The basic problem was that the film did not match the book, to such an extent that the meaning was lost. The message of the story was diminished, altered and bore very little relationship to the work it purported to depict. It was a real disappointment.

This Sunday is Bible Sunday- and in our Gospel reading, Jesus talks about the need to read the scriptures carefully, but also to get our nose out of the book and to look to the world around us for the playing out of the promises of God. In other words, to seek out an authentic reality that matches the message. He says (to a mixture of friends and accusers):

'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life.'

The Hebrew community had built up a load of assumptions about what the promised messiah looked like, and Christ didn't seem to them to fit the bill. But Jesus encourages them to look again. Even though it's nothing like they expected (no crown or worldly power or deference first to the religious authorities), Jesus explains that his presence is in fact entirely consistent with all that the scriptures affirm. Unlike the film of *Gone to Earth*, there is a match between the writing and the reality. Jesus embodies all that was prophesied, and that's the challenge. As he goes on to note, 'Moses wrote about me'.

As Billy Graham once said, the Bible is our 'love letter from God'. We need to know it to know what love looks like, and sometimes love in the world around us is in conflict with our expectations, and yet entirely consistent with God's ways. That can be humbling, but it's utterly biblical, because Jesus is the archetypal example. In our world today, the same cautionary tale plays out. Knowing the Bible really matters (and today we give thanks for all those organisations that seek to make sure it reaches far flung places and is translated faithfully into different languages), but we also need to look up from the pages and prayerfully look for the story lived out in the world. The great theologian Karl Barth talked about the need to keep the Bible- the eternal promises of God- in our consciousness as we read the newspaper each morning. Where do we see love? Where do we see kindness, gentleness, joy, peace, self-control, patience? Where do we see conflict that longs for the redemptive power of Christ to break through? As we turn, in love, to a world in agony, where do we see the power of Christ at work and join in?