

## Collects & Readings for 9<sup>th</sup> July – 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023

We encourage you to use these meditations as a supplement to the Daily Hope phonenumber. The phonenumber offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. The line – which is available 24 hours a day- is on **0800 804 8044**.

### Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Trinity 5

Almighty and everlasting God,  
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church  
is governed and sanctified:  
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,  
that in their vocation and ministry  
they may serve you in holiness and truth  
to the glory of your name;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*Zechariah 9.9-12; Ps.145.8-15; Romans 7.15-25a; Matt.11.16-19, 25-30*

After the nation of Israel's return from exile in Babylon around 538 B.C., one of the twelve minor prophets, and priest, Zechariah, prophesied of a future Messiah who will be "mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (v.9). As we know from the Gospel accounts, Christ entered Jerusalem mounted upon a colt, one that he had told two of his disciples to fetch from a village near the Mount of Olives (Mark 11:2) in order that the prophecy would be fulfilled. Zechariah also prophesies that this coming Messiah, Christ, will "speak peace to the nations" (v.10) and that his rule shall be "to the ends of the earth" (v.10) which we see fulfilled in Christ in that his word brings peace to all those that hear it, listen and act upon it, and that come the time of Christ's millennial reign, he will rule over all creation. Zechariah gave his fulfilled prophecy around 550 years prior to the events taking place in the earthly ministry of Christ, thus vindicating it as God's word.

# Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Trinity 6

Merciful God,  
you have prepared for those who love you  
such good things as pass our understanding:  
pour into our hearts such love toward you  
that we, loving you in all things and above all things,  
may obtain your promises,  
which exceed all that we can desire;  
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.**

*Isaiah 55.10-13; Psalm 65.1-13; Romans 8.1-11; Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23*

It's that time in the three year cycle of readings when we hear the Parable of the Sower. It's so familiar that it can feel difficult to say much that you haven't already heard before. So, an alternative, ancient, approach this week – which you can do with many other biblical texts as well.

- Read the story through slowly.
- Keep a few moments of quiet.
- Read the story through again slowly.
- Note any particular word or phrase that stands out.
- Read the story through for a final time.
- Ponder what that word or phrase might mean and any questions that it raises for you.
- Offer those thoughts and questions up to God in prayer.

## Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2023

Trinity 7

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.**

*Isaiah 44.6-8; Ps. 86.11-17; Romans 8.12-25; Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43*

Gardening is not my forte! I read various books, collect tips from Alan Titchmarsh on the radio, and try to watch 'Gardener's World' when it is on TV. Gardening is still not my forte! Part of the problem is that I am not patient enough. I want my vegetables to sprout instantly. Jesus says something about patience in the parable recorded by Matthew. Having seen that weeds have grown up amongst wheat, the servants immediately want to go out and gather them up. The Master, however, urges caution. He tells them not to do so, or the good plants could be uprooted along with the bad. God works in a comparable way. We so often want God to act much faster in our world than he does. We must have faith that God will do what he chooses, when he chooses. We must trust that it is for our good.

## Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Trinity 8

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,  
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern  
both our hearts and bodies in the ways of your laws  
and the works of your commandments;  
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,  
we may be preserved in body and soul;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*1 Kings 3.5-12; Ps.119.129-136; Romans 8.26-39; Matt.13.31-33, 44-52*

To say that the kingdom of heaven seems quite important to Jesus is something of an understatement. It's the principal theme throughout Jesus' central discourse in Matthew's gospel, an excerpt of which we read today, and told in parables. We might sense the immediacy of Jesus' words in these parables, and we should, because we're being asked to make a decision. And the moment is now. Buy the field with hidden treasure now! Buy the pearl of great value now! Tomorrow, someone else may have bought them and it will be too late. The treasure will be gone, the pearl lost for ever. When Jesus says earlier in Matthew, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near", he's effectively saying, "Turn to me, because I am here".

## **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

### The Transfiguration

Father in heaven,  
whose Son Jesus Christ was wonderfully transfigured  
before chosen witnesses upon the holy mountain,  
and spoke of the exodus he would accomplish at Jerusalem:  
give us strength so to hear his voice and bear our cross  
that in the world to come we may see him as he is;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14; Psalm 97; 2 Peter 1.16-19; Luke 9.28-36*

The Transfiguration of Christ is one of only a few times in the New Testament that God the Father speaks directly to those present, other examples are at Jesus' Baptism, and also prior to the Crucifixion in John 12:28. Both at the Transfiguration and Baptism, God the Father says that Christ is his beloved son, or his chosen one, and that everyone should listen to him, and hence abide by his words. We see this in v.35 and also at the Jesus' Baptism in Matthew 3:16, where God says "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased". God the Father only speaks at crucial times in Christ's life and ministry, and in today's Gospel reading it is to instruct and assure Peter, John, and James of the centrality and importance of Christ and his earthly ministry, that there be no doubt about what he has come to accomplish. The Transfiguration also serves as an echo of Moses seeing God's glory atop Mt. Sinai, much like many of Christ's earthly acts being repeats of former things, and it looks forward to when Christ is glorified at his ascension into Heaven after his many appearances.

## **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

The Blessed Virgin Mary

Almighty God,  
who looked upon the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
and chose her to be the mother of your only Son:  
grant that we who are redeemed by his blood  
may share with her in the glory of your eternal kingdom;  
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.**

*Isaiah 61.10-11; Psalm 45.10-17; Galatians 4.4-7; Luke 1.46-55*

The Blessed Virgin Mary can be a contentious figure within Christian life and tradition, often because of the layers of meaning that have been attributed to her down the ages by varieties of tradition and practice. It's such a shame that this is the case, however, because in the person of Our Lady, we have a wonderful example to aspire to. Someone who answered God's call upon her life with obedience, humility and trust. She couldn't foresee what life would throw at her, but she trusted in God to see her through and, according to Christian tradition, received her eternal reward. How might we follow Our Lady's example of humility and trust in God, in spite of the things that we face in life and in the journey of faith?

## **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

Trinity 11

O God, you declare your almighty power  
most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:  
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,  
that we, running the way of your commandments,  
may receive your gracious promises,  
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;  
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.**

*Isaiah 56.1,6-8; Psalm 67; Romans 11.1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15.10-28*

We live in a world where many experience discrimination. This comes about when individuals look down upon others because of their race or creed; and there are many other reasons why people are marginalised. When we read Matthew's gospel, we are taught that all are welcome in the Kingdom of God. When Jesus meets the Canaanite woman, he stresses that he is there to rescue Israel, but the woman says that even dogs get treated better than she does, as an outsider. Jesus rewards her and heals her daughter because of the faith she has in the equality of God. If only our world was more inclusive today!

## **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

Trinity 12

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray  
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:  
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,  
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid  
and giving us those good things  
which we are not worthy to ask  
but through the merits and mediation  
of 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.**

*Isaiah 51.1-6; Psalm 138; Romans 12.1-8; Matthew 16.13-20*

Has Jesus ever asked a more vital question: "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter's response makes it clear that such question requires an answer grounded in the revelation of who Jesus is: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God". That question, concerning who we say Jesus is, invites us still today. And seeking to answer takes us on a journey to the deepest questions and longings of the heart. To discover this revealed truth, to deepen our faith in Jesus as disclosed by Scripture and Tradition, is to rejoice in the truth that has been entrusted to the Church.

## Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023

Trinity 13

Almighty God,  
who called your Church to bear witness  
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:  
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,  
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;  
through him who was lifted up on the cross,  
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*Jeremiah 15.15-21; Psalm 26.1-8; Romans 12.9-21; Matthew 16.21-28*

In today's Gospel reading Jesus teaches his disciples that his suffering, death, and Resurrection on the third day must come to pass for his work to be complete. Despite Peter's protest at Jesus' message, He rebukes Peter for thinking from a merely earthly perspective, as Peter is thinking that the Jewish Messiah cannot possibly suffer or die. But, he doesn't comprehend what Jesus is teaching nor does he realise at the time that Jesus' atoning death upon the cross is essential in order to bring about the salvation of all those who truly place their faith in him. In v.24-25 Jesus teaches us that if we are truly to follow him then we are to sacrifice ourselves and our lives in order to do so, bearing our cross to the end. There is much debate surrounding v.28 about whether Christ meant that those present wouldn't see death until his second coming, but here Christ actually references Daniel 7:13-14 and is referring to those present not dying before the prophecy in Daniel 7 is fulfilled, that being Christ receiving the everlasting Kingdom from his father.

## Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Trinity 14

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.**

*Ezekiel 33.7-11; Psalm 119.33-40; Romans 13.8-14; Matthew 18.15-20*

In his letter to the Romans, St Paul works to lay out a carefully argued case about why the Christian faith is not only the right way, but also why it also holds water intellectually and as a response to the demands of the Law. Sometimes, he does this in a detailed way - as he does when describing the works of darkness. However, in being so prescriptive (e.g. drunkenness & debauchery) about what constitutes sinful behaviour there's a risk that we might not always acknowledge other sinful aspects of human life as well, especially if the days of a 'good night out' are but a distant memory. What are the less wholesome aspects of your behaviour? What are the sins that you might need to repent of and the traits or actions that you need to work on and change in order to live in the light of Christ?

## **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Trinity 15

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.**

*Genesis 50.15-21; Psalm 103.1-13; Romans 14.1-12; Matthew 18.21-35*

'Forgive and forget' are two remarkably simple words. However, when you put the two together, they make the suggested actions exceedingly difficult to comprehend. How many times have you forgiven someone, but the injury caused by the offender lingers in your mind? More often than not, a slight against you can turn into a grudge, and a grudge can build and build, never to disappear. Our passage from Matthew's gospel illustrates what can happen if you do not forgive, especially if you have forgotten the time when mercy was shown to you. There is a great cost in not forgetting and not forgiving. That is why forgiveness is such an important part of the Lord's Prayer.



## Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Trinity 16

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; 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.**

*Jonah 3.10-4.11; Psalm 145.1-8; Philippians 1.21-30; Matthew 20.1-16*

In today's Gospel reading Jesus tells a parable that likens the kingdom of heaven to a landowner who hires labourers for his vineyard. From early morning to evening, the landowner invites many to work in his vineyard, and agrees with each a denarius for the day's work. God, of course, can be compared to the landowner, and Israel to the vineyard. One lesson to consider in this parable is that the through work of planting and tending, and in "the burden of the day and the scorching heat", God seeks relationship with us. But still, some labourers grumble. So, Jesus is reminding us that everything comes from God. And it's not for us to place any restriction on such generosity. Moreover, the love of God in Christ is greater than anything we could expect or imagine.

## Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023

Trinity 17

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.**

*Ezekiel 18.1-4, 25-end; Psalm 25.1-8; Philippians 2.1-13; Matt. 21.23-32*

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives another of his masterful and wise responses to those who challenge him, namely the Pharisees, elders and high priests of the Sanhedrin. Knowing their reasonings beforehand, Jesus asks them something that he knows they will not answer, for fear of upsetting those who knew John the Baptist to have been a prophet that spoke of Christ's coming. Jesus goes on to give a parable that teaches a valuable lesson, that it is a person's inward feelings, actions, intentions and motivations that are the most important consideration, rather than what they appear to be doing outwardly. He relates this idea to faith in him, in that those who were considered to be least such as tax collectors and prostitutes, are to enter the kingdom of Heaven if they have genuine inward faith, and yet those who appear Godly externally but do not have true faith inwardly, will not enter God's kingdom.

## **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

Trinity 18

Almighty and everlasting God,  
increase in us your gift of faith  
that, forsaking what lies behind  
and reaching out to that which is before,  
we may run the way of your commandments  
and win the crown of everlasting joy;  
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.**

*Isaiah 5.1-7; Psalm 80.9-17; Philippians 3.4b-14; Matthew 21.33-46*

Today's gospel parable is one where Jesus speaks so plainly that those hearing it can't help but get the gist of what he's saying and many don't like what they hear. Just a couple of chapters before we get into the thick end of Jesus' death and resurrection, we can see why the gospel writer chose to recall this incident here, alluding as it does to people's failure to recognise Jesus for who he is and indeed actively opposing him and what he stands for. We have the opportunity to recognise Jesus in our midst and in our lives. How can we make sure that our hearts are always ready to receive him and to let him bring out the harvest of eternity in us?

## Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Trinity 19

O God, forasmuch as without you  
we are not able to please you;  
mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit  
may in all things direct and rule our hearts;  
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.**

*Isaiah 25.1-9; Psalm 23; Philippians 4.1-9; Matthew 22.1-14*

The parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew's gospel says something about gratitude. We are told about a king who invites the great and the good to a huge feast, but they make excuses. The invitation is then extended to others, everyone in the streets, who accept with enthusiasm. A number of theologians think that this parable says more about attitudes to Jesus, than a dinner party. Jesus, the Word made flesh, came to this earth to dwell among us. He invited those he met to the live as God wished them to live; he offered them forgiveness and salvation. But like those people who came up with excuses, Jesus was shunned by his own people, which eventually led to his death on the cross. This teaches us that we should accept Jesus, like a guest accepting an invitation, to join in wholeheartedly with what our Saviour has to offer us. The banquet in the Kingdom of God is there for all – we just have to say yes!

## Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2023

Trinity 20

God, the giver of life,  
whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:  
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ  
and make us eager to do your will,  
that we may share with the whole creation  
the joys of eternal life;  
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.**

*Isaiah 45.1-7; Ps. 96.1-13; 1 Thessalonians 1.1-10; Matthew 22.15-22*

"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" It's a legitimate question in itself, and raises important moral, political, and religious issues. But it was a question difficult to answer without personal cost given the problematic politics of the time. Jesus's response, however, reminds us of just how much we owe and to whom. Caesar was owed that which bears his image and his name; a coin. God is owed that which bears his image and his name; that's us. Quite simply, everything belongs to God. And so, giving what is God's back to God, that can only be our entire self. Can we give ourselves and all that we have without holding back anything? No, not without the love of God. But then, we could never do anything without him, could we?

## **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

Bible Sunday

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.**

*Nehemiah 8.1-12; Ps. 119.9-16; Colossians 3.12-17; Matthew 24.30-35*

In today's reading, Paul exhorts the members of the Church at Colossae to put on qualities becoming of their faith in Christ, listed in v.12. He teaches that we should grant others the same grace in forgiveness that God has granted us, in forgiving us for all our sins, past, present, and future, because of our faith in Christ and His atoning work on the Cross. Paul then goes on to say above all, to maintain love for one another, as it binds all things together in harmony. Next, he speaks a crucial lesson, to let the words of Christ dwell in us. Such a thing requires that we are in constant study of God's word in Scripture, in order that we are not only full of His words in our hearts and minds, but also understand them as best as we are able, which in turns allows us to "teach and admonish one another in

all wisdom" (v.16), for without God's word we cannot know true wisdom, nor can we apply and live out his will if we do not know his word. Finally he speaks of giving thanks to God in all things, that no matter what we are doing, we should be thankful and do it to the glory of God, whether in hardships or blessings, lack or abundance.

## **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023**

All Souls Day

Everlasting God, our maker and redeemer,  
grant us, with all the faithful departed,  
the sure benefits of your Son's saving passion and glorious resurrection,  
that, in the last day,  
when you gather up all things in Christ,  
we may with them enjoy the fullness of your promises;  
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.**

*Lamentations 3.17-26, 31-33; Psalm 23; Romans 5.5-11; John 5.19-25*

Today, we remember the faithful departed. It is a challenging time for many, when we reminisce about times past, light candles and offer prayers. It is a day when we give thanks to God for those who have died; we give thanks for their love, inspiration and example. And it is at times like this that we turn to Scripture for comfort. Psalm 23 speaks of the Lord as the loving shepherd, the one who looks out for those under his care, and who walks by their side in the valley of death. And John records Jesus speaking of God raising the dead to new life. Jesus himself says that anyone who hears his word has eternal life. It is a sure promise in which we can have the utmost confidence. Which passages of Scripture bring you comfort at times of difficulty and challenge?

# Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## All Saints Sunday

Almighty God,  
you have knit together your elect  
in one communion and fellowship  
in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord:  
grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints  
in all virtuous and godly living  
that we may come to those inexpressible joys  
that you have prepared for those who truly love you;  
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.**

*Revelation 7.9-17; Psalm 34.1-10; 1 John 3.1-3; Matthew 5.1-12*

All Saints Day is a day of celebration within the life of the Church generally, but within the Benefice it's a particular celebration as All Saints Wigston celebrates its 'patronal festival' and we'll be joined by Bishop Martyn this morning to mark it. As we think about the saints of God throughout the ages with their faith and devotion to God, sometimes in spite of the most trying and difficult of circumstances, how might we follow their example in following Jesus? In today's gospel reading, Jesus gives us several clues about the holy life; how can we put those into practice in our lives today?

## **Benefice Updates**

### **Fr Nick**

Fr Nick has been appointed as Chaplain of Shiplake College, Henley on Thames. He'll take up his post at the end of August, but his final service in the Benefice will be at All Saints on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August at 10am.

### **Fr Chris' Sabbatical.**

Fr Chris will be on sabbatical this summer, along with some annual leave, returning at the end of October half term. During this time, Fr Paul Betts will be looking after the parishes, together with the churchwardens. Fr Paul can be contacted on: 0116 2774085.

