



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2024- 2nd SUNDAY OF LENT

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
that they may return to the way of righteousness:
grant to all those who are admitted
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
that they may reject those things
that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 22. 23-31

- 23 Praise the Lord, you that fear him; ♦
O seed of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, O seed of Israel.
- 24 For he has not despised nor abhorred the suffering of the poor;
neither has he hidden his face from them; ♦
but when they cried to him he heard them.
- 25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; ♦
I will perform my vows
in the presence of those that fear you.
- 26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; ♦
those who seek the Lord shall praise him;
their hearts shall live for ever.
- 27 All the ends of the earth
shall remember and turn to the Lord, ♦
and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.
- 28 For the kingdom is the Lord's ♦
and he rules over the nations.
- 29 How can those who sleep in the earth
bow down in worship, ♦
or those who go down to the dust kneel before him ♦
- 30 He has saved my life for himself;
my descendants shall serve him; ♦
this shall be told of the Lord for generations to come.
- 31 They shall come and make known his salvation,
to a people yet unborn, ♦
declaring that he, the Lord, has done it.

Genesis 17. 1-7, 15-16

The Sign of the Covenant

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

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 8, verses 31-38.

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:

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

I am the light of the world, says the Lord. Whoever follows me has the light of life.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 8 verses 31-38.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

A Reflection from Hannah...

How we love life to be straightforward! And yet it so rarely is- in simply trying to get through the tasks of the day, we can encounter any number of setbacks or obstacles. Cars breaking down, appointments cancelled, a rather laboured journey through customs, a virus to knock us back just as we need to be out and about...

And often, in the light of good news particularly, we have even higher expectations for how things should go. Here, in today's Gospel reading, Jesus has just been named the Messiah, the Son of God, by Peter, in that famous moment in Caesarea. Stood in a place that represented the wandering complexity of our hearts, Christ was named by his closest friend.

After that high point, you might expect some more of the same. But instead Jesus chooses to talk about his death and suffering, and it's too much for Peter to bear. He rebukes Jesus- it's a bit like the way in which speaking of mortality is stifled in our culture, with the 'don't talk daft' approach to deathbed conversations. We don't want to focus on difficult and painful things. But Jesus is insistent- he wants to communicate the full reality of his mission to his friends, without sugar-coating the agonies. And more than that, he insists that the disciples too will need to lead a cross-shaped life if they want to follow him.

So life as a disciple begins with an attitude - suffering is part of the picture and we should expect it. It's hard to hear (as it certainly was for those first disciples), but it is the path to life. As Jesus reminds us, if we make our outlook all about ourselves, our comfort, our smooth route through, we've actually lost something precious about our very identity. It is in Christ we are known as we truly are, and we find ourselves when we stop trying to create our own definitions. Denying ourselves, such a key theme during Lent, is about letting Jesus lead us into those cross-shaped ways, where the focus is no longer our frustration at things not going as we'd like them to, but instead an honest understanding that we are journeying through a broken world, but in the blessed company and pattern of the very author of life in all its fulness- the one who names us a child of God, and shows us who we really are.