

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 19 June 2022 - 1st after Trinity

COLLECT

O God,
the strength of all those who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you both in will and deed;
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 42

- 1 As the deer longs for the water brooks, ♦
so longs my soul for you, O God.
- 2 My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God; ♦
when shall I come before the presence of God?
- 3 My tears have been my bread day and night, ♦
while all day long they say to me, 'Where is now your God?'
- 4 Now when I think on these things, I pour out my soul: ♦
how I went with the multitude
and led the procession to the house of God,
- 5 With the voice of praise and thanksgiving, ♦
among those who kept holy day.
- 6 Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul, ♦
and why are you so disquieted within me?
- 7 O put your trust in God; ♦
for I will yet give him thanks,
who is the help of my countenance, and my God.
- 8 My soul is heavy within me; ♦
therefore I will remember you from the land of Jordan,
and from Hermon and the hill of Mizar.
- 9 Deep calls to deep in the thunder of your waterfalls; ♦
all your breakers and waves have gone over me.
- 10 The Lord will grant his loving-kindness in the daytime; ♦
through the night his song will be with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.
- 11 I say to God my rock,
'Why have you forgotten me, ♦
and why go I so heavily, while the enemy oppresses me?'
- 12 As they crush my bones, my enemies mock me; ♦
while all day long they say to me, 'Where is now your God?'

- 13 Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul, ♦
and why are you so disquieted within me?
- 14 O put your trust in God; ♦
for I will yet give him thanks,
who is the help of my countenance, and my God.

Galatians 3.23-29

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring,^[a] heirs according to the promise.

*Alleluia, **Alleluia.***

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home in you; through him give thanks to God the Father.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke, chapter 8, verses 26 to 39.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁶ Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes,^[a] which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn^[b] no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me'— ²⁹ for Jesus^[c] had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Legion'; for many demons had entered him. ³¹ They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³² Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons^[d] begged Jesus^[e] to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴ When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. ³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes^[f] asked Jesus^[g] to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus^[h] sent him away, saying, ³⁹ 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Hannah....

I've been watching the BBC drama *Sherwood*. It's set in the modern day, but looks back to the mid-eighties. At one point, the police detective has to explain to his younger colleagues the deeply insulting and hurtful connotations of the word 'scab' - a term that those who lived through the miners' strikes understood in its complex fullness. A term that still has power today for those who were there then. Times change - our understanding of ourselves is a dynamic thing, and so when we greet the language and assumptions from another era, we can find it quite unsteady, or fail to see their relevance.

It's a bit like that with our Gospel reading this week. As we hear about the strange business of demons possessing a vulnerable man, and how they move between human and pig, we can wonder whether the whole story just represents an outdated anthropology. Is what was then understood as demonic possession really just a psychiatric condition, explained by neurochemical imbalance? Can it teach us anything, in an age saturated with different therapies and treatments for all manner of human ailing?

In some ways, to take that approach is to miss the point of the account. Yes, it is weird to our ears- uncomfortable, even a bit embarrassing. We might just think of a first century Palestine understanding of the human condition as being outdated, even offensive. But, as we've noticed many times before, comfort is not part of the promises of God! It's no bad thing to face the messy reality and the mystery of suffering, however it is accounted. As we read about the healing of a man who is outcast, tormented, a danger to himself and others; we see the glorious work of Christ in the world. We realise once again that where we lack understanding- even today in the context of such amazing scientific progress- God does not. There is no place that is a challenge to the authority of Christ, whose purpose is always healing, reconciliation, wholeness. He converses with realms and powers that are beyond our grasp, and liberates us from their evil intent. He proclaims Jubilee and brings it into the everyday lives of all he encounters- in the story of one man, who was healed and became an Evangelist in his home town, we are reminded of the scope of Christ's love- he is Lord of all that is.