

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 25 JUNE 2023 - TRINITY 3

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
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.

Psalm 69. 8–11[12–17]18–20

- 8 For your sake have I suffered reproach; ♦
shame has covered my face.
- 9 I have become a stranger to my kindred, ♦
an alien to my mother's children.
- 10 Zeal for your house has eaten me up; ♦
the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.
- 11 I humbled myself with fasting, ♦
but that was turned to my reproach.
- [12 I put on sackcloth also ♦
and became a byword among them.
- 13 Those who sit at the gate murmur against me, ♦
and the drunkards make songs about me.
- 14 But as for me, I make my prayer to you, O Lord; ♦
at an acceptable time, O God.
- 15 Answer me, O God, in the abundance of your mercy ♦
and with your sure salvation.
- 16 Draw me out of the mire, that I sink not; ♦
let me be rescued from those who hate me and out of the deep waters.
- 17 Let not the water flood drown me, neither the deep swallow me up; ♦
let not the Pit shut its mouth upon me.
- 18 Answer me, Lord, for your loving-kindness is good; ♦
turn to me in the multitude of your mercies.
- 19 Hide not your face from your servant; ♦
be swift to answer me, for I am in trouble.
- 20 Draw near to my soul and redeem me; ♦
deliver me because of my enemies.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans, Chapter 6, verses 1b to 11.

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

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 Matthew, chapter 10 verses 24 to 39.

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus said, 'A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Peter...

In a week when inflation just goes on rising despite all the efforts to curb it; when the counter-offensive in Ukraine appears so slow as to be having virtually no effect in turning the course of the war; when politics on both sides of the Atlantic reveals more of the folly of which human beings are capable than effective thinking and action for the good of all; - in such a week our Gospel reading just seems to make things worse. Jesus says, "Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword..." And while his earlier words "nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known" might seem encouraging when it comes to finding out the truth about some of the many dodgy things going on around us, it makes us shiver too – for we all have things tucked away in dark corners.

But that is only to look at half the picture. The Gospel reading turns around that verse in the middle: "So do not be afraid: you are of more value than many sparrows" Jesus is ruthless in uncovering the corruption and folly of life in the world, but only so that he can help us turn instead to the good story. Despite all this distortion, we are loved and known – and so completely known that even our deepest secrets are already held by the God who loves us (and doesn't stop loving us no matter what is hidden in the dark). This is why the Gospel passage ends with that familiar and powerful image: "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." The language of losing and finding isn't immediately obvious, but a moment's thought makes it clear: those who spend their energy building an image, a character, a personality that is only concerned with their own self-chosen goals is going to be disappointed; those who are motivated by Jesus' own model of 'living for others' will find fulfilment.

St Paul, writing to the church in Rome, maps all this onto our journey in faith with Christ. "We have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life," he says. Our choosing to follow Christ inevitably plunges us deeper into the sufferings of the world – but for a purpose. We are, as Jesus taught us, not afraid, for we shall 'walk in newness of life.'