

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 2 JULY 2023- TRINITY 4

COLLECT

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may so pass through things temporal
that we lose not our hold on things eternal;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalms 89.1-4, 15-18

- 1 My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: ♦
with my mouth will I proclaim your faithfulness
throughout all generations.
- 2 I will declare that your love is established for ever; ♦
you have set your faithfulness as firm as the heavens.
- 3 For you said: 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one; ♦
I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
- 4 "Your seed will I establish for ever ♦
and build up your throne for all generations."
- 15 Happy are the people who know the shout of triumph: ♦
they walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance.
- 16 In your name they rejoice all the day long ♦
and are exalted in your righteousness.
- 17 For you are the glory of their strength, ♦
and in your favour you lift up our heads.
- 18 Truly the Lord is our shield; ♦
the Holy One of Israel is our king.

Romans 6.12-23

Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Slaves of Righteousness

What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Acclamation (acclamation to be read during Eucharist service only)

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening. You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 10 verse 40 to 42.

Glory to you, O Lord

Rewards

‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Hannah...

Both of this week's readings touch on the ever-evolving question of Christian ethics- given what we believe, *how then shall we live?* When we consider the Gospel reading, the answers on offer are certainly easier to understand than the long, complex deliberations of St Paul! The Gospel is (relatively) simple to grasp, but quite a challenge to live. It is about lavish welcome and selfless hospitality- in recognising the mark of Christ in another, we are serving him as we serve our fellow humans. It's a bit like the story, much later in Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus says that when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned and welcome the stranger, we do those very things to him. There was a song we used to sing at school to remind us of those words- 'When I needed a neighbour'. Perhaps you know it?

Straightforward? Well yes... in theory! It can be hard to live because in welcoming the stranger and all that entails, we make ourselves vulnerable. We worry that the other person might take advantage, might not *really* require our help, that it's not our place to help, or that we are only a 'sticking plaster' for a bigger, societal issue. And all that might be true- but it's not an argument for ignoring need. Counter-cultural as it may seem, mutual vulnerability *is* part of the Christian way- to have need of one another is to be truly human. It's just that so often we have been so deeply formed to value self-sufficiency that we find it really hard to admit when can't go it alone.

As we consider the challenge of welcome and hospitality, it's perhaps helpful to recognise that every genuine encounter is one of both giving *and* receiving. Even if we are cast as 'the helper' we can nevertheless be blessed by recognising the image of God in another and being prepared to receive Christ through them. As St Paul (in his round-about way!) reminds us, our choices are a consequence of the love in which we are held- when we appreciate even just a little of the height, breadth and depth of what that means, we start to see glimpses of God in the most difficult and unlikely places... and to respond in love. It's not about following a formula or set of rules or thinking 'well, I'm forgiven so who cares what I do'- rather, a life of loving goodness is an inevitable outflowing of the Gospel at work in our lives. As these words attributed to St Augustine put it- 'Love God and do as you please'.