

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 27 August – Trinity 12

COLLECT

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.

Psalm 138

- 1 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; ♦
before the gods will I sing praise to you.
- 2 I will bow down towards your holy temple and praise your name,
because of your love and faithfulness; ♦
for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.
- 3 In the day that I called to you, you answered me; ♦
you put new strength in my soul.
- 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, ♦
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- 5 They shall sing of the ways of the Lord, ♦
that great is the glory of the Lord.
- 6 Though the Lord be high, he watches over the lowly; ♦
as for the proud, he regards them from afar.
- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will preserve me; ♦
you will stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;
your right hand will save me.
- 8 The Lord shall make good his purpose for me; ♦
your loving-kindness, O Lord, endures for ever; forsake not the work of your hands.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans, chapter 12, verses 1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Lord, you have the words of eternal life: we believe that you are the Holy One of God.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13 to 20

Glory to you, O Lord

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Peter...

This Gospel passage is often referred to as Peter's confession of faith: the moment when Peter, in response to Jesus' question, spills the beans and says openly that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour. Like every Gospel passage, we hear it with a swirl of memories. As soon as I hear this reading I am reminded of too many sermons I've sat through where you just know that the preacher will end up putting Jesus' question to the congregation "But who do you say that I am?" – which either produces guilt in me, or makes me want to say, "Well, if you don't know then I'm sure I don't!"

But there are two serious things here. First, this is not a question that can be repeated. At the start of Jesus' ministry there was uncertainty. Gradually the evidence began to stack up: words, deeds, a new way of seeing God and the world – all culminating in the unjust death and utterly astonishing moment of resurrection. God has answered the question. Peter's response to Jesus was but one moment along the road of God's revealing of his purposes. Secondly, we miss the point if we put the emphasis on Peter. Yes, Peter's words contributed to this pattern of unfolding revelation, but it is what God is doing that matters. What Peter said (or what we say now) makes no difference to what God does. The complete confidence that we can have in God's passionate care for creation is summed up in Jesus' words about the community he is calling into being: 'on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.' What God is doing cannot be undone or brought down. God is building the therapy that will heal all the ills of creation and we can only wonder and be thankful.