

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 2023 – Last after TRINITY

COLLECT

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 1

- 1 Blessed are they who have not walked
in the counsel of the wicked, ♦
nor lingered in the way of sinners,
nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.
- 2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord ♦
and they meditate on his law day and night.
- 3 Like a tree planted by streams of water
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither, ♦
whatever they do, it shall prosper.
- 4 As for the wicked, it is not so with them; ♦
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgement, ♦
nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, ♦
but the way of the wicked shall perish.

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 2, verses 1-8

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully maltreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

The word of God is alive and active: it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 22, verses 34-46.

Glory to you, O Lord

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet' "?

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?' No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Peter...

At first our Gospel reading seems like a continuation of last week – but we've actually skipped 12 verses! There is continuity in that this is another attempt by the Pharisees – a key group in the Jewish leadership – to deal with the threat they perceive Jesus to be.

In human terms it is utterly fascinating. What gives them the encouragement to have another go at Jesus is that the Sadducees had been silenced by Jesus! This captures something so characteristic of people everywhere (even if it's not something very attractive): it is the confidence that comes when you witness someone else whom you don't like being put down. And there is a long-standing rivalry between Pharisees and Sadducees, so seeing their rivals silenced empowers the Pharisees to have another go. But there is more: being silenced is such a powerful image. We live in a world where too many struggle to have their voice heard; where too many are silenced by the powerful or those who believe themselves to be in the right. In our experience, to be silenced is wholly negative. It looks as though the Pharisees think the same. The Sadducees have been put down, they have lost, but there is now a new opening for them...

So they engage Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest?" And Jesus gives a perfect, textbook answer to which none of them can object. Before they can draw breath, however, Jesus says to them "Whose son is the Messiah?" They quote the standard answer, "The son of David" – only to have Jesus challenge them by quoting Psalm 110. And the encounter ends abruptly: 'No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.' Silenced again. Only this time it's the Pharisees. And now we have to stop and think. This silencing is not a wholly negative experience. Jesus is giving them the opportunity to think again. But they are so stuck in their view of how things should be that they cannot engage in a bit of lateral thinking, can't find a new way – and so risk missing the invitation to life that comes from every encounter with God in Christ.