



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 12 MAY 2024- EASTER 7**

COLLECT

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

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.

Acts 1.15-17, 21-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty people) and said, 'Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus— for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.'

So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.' So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.' And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from John, chapter 17, verses 6-19.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 17, verses 6-19.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

A Reflection from Hannah...

'And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.'

Do you remember learning about the water cycle at school? This is an enormously simplified account, but one part of it is that the rain comes down from the clouds and falls to the earth, and then it evaporates off the ground and forms clouds again. And so it goes on, round and round.

Something of that cyclic process is going on in our Gospel reading today. Christ 'came down' in the incarnation- became human, dwelt as one of us, experienced the full breadth of the human condition in all its beauty and horror- and now that part of the story is finished. There is nothing left to say or do- Jesus has lived that life, he has kept company with his closest friends and taught them all he could about living as God's children. The next thing he now faces is the desolation of the cross.

And in this liminal space between life and death, Christ chooses to pray. And the prayer he prays teaches us something about the Ascension (which we celebrate/d on Thursday) and the very nature of what Emmanuel (God-with-us) means for our humanity. Just as Christ returns to the Father, we are now able to live as he does here on earth. We too belong to God, and are chosen instruments of God's love in the world today- a bit like the water cycle, that loving action, mediated by the Holy Spirit, goes round and round. Christ is equally at home in heaven and on earth, and we are invited to live as citizens of heaven here and now.

That has enormous implications. As Jesus prays and awaits his betrayal, he notes that his disciples, like him, do not belong to the world. He prays for their protection from evil, and he prays for them to be one. Through Christ, we are all invited to flourish in the way that God has made us- to become the fullness of all we have been created to be, fullness that begins with our identity as Children of God, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

That promise means that by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being transformed into Christ's likeness- the good, the fruits, the love will grow in us as we stay close to God in prayer and humility. And when that grows, it is a blessing for the world. Likewise, though (and this can sometimes be even harder to swallow!), the same is true of others, and the potential to grow in goodness is there in everyone. Sometimes we struggle to see it, but no matter how difficult we find another person, or how sorry their situation is, how tempted we might be to walk on by, as disciples we are always asked to see the truth of who they are- their precious humanity and glorious depths- and to name those, in defiance of other names that are suggested. Some time ago, I visited someone's bedside. They thanked me for 'bothering with this old bat'. I said I didn't see an old bat anywhere! I saw a person- known and loved by God. Building that up in one another and refusing to collude with our own temptation to diminish ourselves is part of the example Christ gives us in this, his most heartfelt prayer.

As St Irenaeus said:

'The glory of God is the human person fully alive.'

As those who have accepted God's love for us, our prayer and our task is to help others to live- to live fully as the people they are. As we make space for one another, we take a step closer to being one, as Christ prayed.