



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 21 JULY 2024- TRINITY 8**

COLLECT

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern
both our hearts and bodies
in the ways of your laws
and the works of your commandments;
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,
we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 23

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; ♦
therefore can I lack nothing.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures ♦
and leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He shall refresh my soul ♦
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; ♦
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You spread a table before me
in the presence of those who trouble me; ♦
you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
- 6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, ♦
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Jeremiah 23.1-6

Restoration after Exile

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

The Righteous Branch of David

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

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 Mark, chapter 6, verses 30-34 and 53-56.

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.**

My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord. I know them, and they follow me.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark, chapter 6, verses 30-34 and 53-56.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Mark 6. 30-34, 53-56

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Healing the Sick in Gennesaret

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market-places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

A Reflection from Hannah...

Tired? Frazzled? Can't find any time to stop? You're in good company! This time of year often feels that way- especially for those of us who are linked to the academic year- we are limping on, longing for the end of term, wondering why time seems to slow down as it approaches. And rest is just around the corner. Over the coming weeks many of us will go on holiday, or at least take a break from the everyday routines.

We need our rest in order to be a blessing in the world. Jesus knew that, and as the disciples return from being out in the world teaching and healing, he tells them to do it- 'come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while'. It certainly sounds tempting! Finding those deserted places where we can settle into the company of Christ, refuel our batteries, take stock and be hidden from the pressures of others is a fundamental part of life as a disciple. It's not a selfish thing, but part of the rhythm of how we are made- if we don't withdraw to that deserted place from time to time, we just get exhausted and cross. It may be a holiday, it may be a stay with relatives, or it may just be a bit of time every day- even in the thick of it- where we 'rest a while' in the solitude of the garden, or a book, or a quiet place in our house.

With that in mind, it's entirely fitting that our psalm is psalm 23- in which the Lord, our shepherd, leads us beside still waters and refreshes our soul. It is God who leads us into the good and nourishing places, who shows us those ways of life in which life can flourish, who guides us through our pilgrimage.

Later in the Gospel reading, after the Jesus and the disciples have 'come away' onto the water to escape the crowds, they greet them again on the shore. So many people running along the waters edge for miles so that they are ready and waiting for Jesus as he disembarks. There follows one of the most heart-wrenching lines in the Gospel, which almost sums up Christ's perspective as he lives amongst us:

'he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd'

Here are the lost sheep, and all of us are at times amongst them. When we forget who we follow, when we have no rest and simply let this 24/7 culture that surrounds us pull us along unrelentingly, when we feel the pressures of what the world tells us matters- to have *things*, to go *places*, to be consumers, to do it all, to narrate, record, shape and share it all on social media, to look for the quick-fix, to stay busy, to define ourselves by our work, to do, do, do.... Gosh, it certainly gets exhausting!

But there is one who calls us, with that still small voice, to remember who we really are, and what really matters. There is one who, by the Holy Spirit, dwells in us and uses us to show compassion, to recognise the 'lost' in one another, and to say 'you are found, you are home'. As we stay close to Christ in prayer, worship, contemplation and rest, we discover afresh our beloved-ness and our vocation. And that is how God's mission continues- through us. As the famous prayer of St Teresa of Avila reminds us:

*Christ has no body now, but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth, but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which he looks
With compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.*