



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 18 AUGUST 2024 - 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. **Amen.**

Psalm 34 (vv 9-14)

- 9 Fear the Lord, all you his holy ones, ♦
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- 10 Lions may lack and suffer hunger, ♦
but those who seek the Lord lack nothing that is good.
- 11 Come, my children, and listen to me; ♦
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
- 12 Who is there who delights in life ♦
and longs for days to enjoy good things?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil ♦
and your lips from lying words.
- 14 Turn from evil and do good; ♦
seek peace and pursue it.

A reading from the book of Proverbs, Chapter 9, verses 1 to 6.

Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.
She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,
she has also set her table.
She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls
from the highest places in the town,
'You that are simple, turn in here!'
To those without sense she says,
'Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight.' *Proverbs 9.1-6*

For the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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 6, verses 24-35.

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.**

I am the bread of life, says the Lord. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 6, verses 51 - 58

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

John 6.51-58

Jesus said to them, 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.'

A Reflection from Peter...

Taking a bunch of grapes to a patient in hospital once seemed a huge luxury: grapes were not always readily available in the shops and they were expensive. Now they are much more common, but still a potent symbol. They are a deliberate attempt to break into the patient's reduced world of sickness and the hospital environment and to conjure up another, more exciting space: "Peel me a grape!"

Today we reach the end of the food and drink part of the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. It's not quite the end of the chapter, but the few remaining verses are not closely connected with the rest. Again Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven." This is a bit like asking us to go back to school and do those complicated algebraic equations where 'x' suddenly and mysteriously comes to be '34'. Jesus, the now familiar figure talking to the crowd, says I am living bread. Not just bread, but living bread, the bread of life. We have one layer of understanding, but we also think "This is gobbledygook!" But sometimes we actually talk in a similar way ourselves. Being in some people's company is so energising, so life-giving that we say, "They're a real tonic! I feel better in their company." (And just as some people lift our spirits, so others can be hard work!). Then there is the more boring bit of looking after our health – like taking an aspirin a day. It's not evident that anything much happens, but we do it, like cleaning our teeth. Jesus is all this: his knowing of us and his loving reveal much in ourselves that we still do not know, things that excite us to new possibilities and give us a hunger for the adventure to go on. Jesus is also the necessary, practical companion who keeps us healthy and steady, like the daily aspirin.

But – and here we come back to those impossible equations – Jesus is not reduced to a pill, not reduced to a flat wafer of bread and a sip of wine. In reaching out our hands to receive Holy Communion we are reaching through the invisible membrane that separates our world from God's world. Suddenly we are standing with Jesus. His life, his strength, his grace, his love are shared with us, making us new, giving us life.