



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 25 AUGUST 2024- TRINITY 13**

COLLECT

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalms 34.15-22

- 15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous ♦
and his ears are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, ♦
to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry and the Lord hears them ♦
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- 18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted ♦
and will save those who are crushed in spirit.
- 19 Many are the troubles of the righteous; ♦
from them all will the Lord deliver them.
- 20 He keeps all their bones, ♦
so that not one of them is broken.
- 21 But evil shall slay the wicked ♦
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- 22 The Lord ransoms the life of his servants ♦
and will condemn none who seek refuge in him.

Joshua 24.1-2a, 14-18

The Tribes Renew the Covenant

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people,

'Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.'

Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our 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 56-69.

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 John, chapter 6, verses 56-69.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

John 6.56-69

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.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

The Words of Eternal Life

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

A Reflection from Hannah...

The German word 'gemütlich' is one of those words (a bit like 'hygge') which cannot be directly translated, but means something along the lines of cozy homeliness. We know it when we experience it, and things like the Ikea catalogue can play into it brilliantly! It is a sense of almost womb-like safety, the furniture arranged 'just so', the smell of good cooking and the snugly glow of a fire, the 'big light' off (!), and lamps or candles bringing a soft, atmospheric glow. To most minds, it's probably a place of deep comfort and assumed safety.

Both of the readings this week, speak of 'home' - but they are far from gemütlich! Our reading from Joshua contains that well-known phrase 'as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord'. In precarious times, the people chose the braver thing- to be households who serve a God of love and freedom, wherever that may lead. At least that was the intention- the Old Testament teaches us plenty about the fickleness of humanity in living out that endeavour.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus once again reminds those listening that 'home' is wherever he is. That word 'abide' shares roots with the word 'abode' - so when Christ says 'Abide in me', we are being invited to make our home in him. That may sound easy and lovely, but if we think that a life of faith should be gemütlich, then the following verses knock us out of that assumption. The disciples themselves notice how difficult Christ's teaching is, and that the way of life to which they are being invited makes no promise of safety or convention. It can, in some circumstances, be nothing less than a collision course with established power that will end in horror... the horror of the cross being the archetypal example.

But Peter, in a flash of wisdom, helps us all to recognise that life with Jesus is the only way to be truly 'alive'. Other ways of living may pretend to have meaning, but their emptiness is revealed as true love is beheld in the face of Christ. 'You have the words of eternal life' says Peter. That word- *eternal*- isn't about the future, it's about fullness of life now, just as much as forever- so it takes us back to that sense that our true home is in Jesus, wherever we literally are. The risk though, is that we misunderstand what that means- it is not (and never promises to be) gemütlich!