

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2023 - TRINITY 14

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose only Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence:
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
through 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 119.33-40

- 33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes ♦
and I shall keep it to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding and I shall keep your law; ♦
I shall keep it with my whole heart.
- 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, ♦
for therein is my delight.
- 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies ♦
and not to unjust gain.
- 37 Turn away my eyes lest they gaze on vanities; ♦
O give me life in your ways.
- 38 Confirm to your servant your promise, ♦
which stands for all who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the reproach which I dread, ♦
because your judgements are good.
- 40 Behold, I long for your commandments; ♦
in your righteousness give me life.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans, chapter 13, verses 8-14

Love for One Another

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

An Urgent Appeal

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Your word is truth, O Lord: consecrate us in the truth.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 18: 15-20.

Glory to you, O Lord

Reproving Another Who Sins

'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Hannah...

When people come to visit, I tidy up in readiness- so that (hopefully) when they arrive they are greeted by a welcome, orderly home. But... if they were to just to take a peek beyond the surface presentation, they would see quite a different story! Drawers stuffed so full that their contents explode out and upwards when they are pulled open. Cupboards containing teetering piles that tumble forwards. Any nook or cranny hidden from sight is stuffed full of things I can't find another home for...

So what's on the outside can be quite different to what's on the inside! Each in their own way, this week's readings are about living openly, vulnerably and in community. They are an invitation to live with our (metaphorical) drawers and cupboards open, rather than in the shadows; to bring into the open the whole of ourselves, rather than keeping some bits hidden. As St Paul says:

'Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day.'

Of course this way of life isn't easy, and we don't always get it right. In our Gospel reading we so often cling to those comforting words 'where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'; but the preceding paragraph about dealing with disagreements has had a much more checkered application in church history. We often get it wrong, but the message remains clear- love is committed to openness to the other, to restoration, wholeness and truth. That is love in the pattern of Jesus, whose presence amongst us brings all things into the light.