

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 2023 - TRINITY 20

COLLECT

God, the giver of life,
whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ
and make us eager to do your will,
that we may share with the whole creation the joys of eternal life;
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.

Psalm 96

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song; ♦
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- 2 Sing to the Lord and bless his name; ♦
tell out his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations ♦
and his wonders among all peoples.
- 4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; ♦
he is more to be feared than all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the nations are but idols; ♦
it is the Lord who made the heavens.
- 6 Honour and majesty are before him; ♦
power and splendour are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; ♦
ascribe to the Lord honour and strength.
- 8 Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦
bring offerings and come into his courts.
- 9 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; ♦
let the whole earth tremble before him.
- 10 Tell it out among the nations that the Lord is king. ♦
He has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; ♦
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
- 12 Let the fields be joyful and all that is in them; ♦
let all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord.
- 13 For he comes, he comes to judge the earth; ♦
with righteousness he will judge the world
and the peoples with his truth.

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation (for Communion services only)

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

Your words, Lord, are spirit and they are life.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 22, verses 15-22.

Glory to you, O Lord

[At Morning Prayer: A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, 22.15-22]

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap Jesus in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

[At Morning Prayer: This is the word of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Thanks be to God.]

A Reflection from Peter...

There are some people who seem curiously unaware of what is happening around them; we often admire them because we get all worked up about things, but they just sail on oblivious. Then there are people who somehow seem to 'get' what is happening; they can read the signs and tell just what is going on in a group of people. We admire them too and wonder how they do it. Today's Gospel shows Jesus in the latter group. He sees and knows what is going on – and he knows just how to respond. As the text says, the Pharisees plotted to entrap Jesus. You can imagine them huddled together in a dark corner scheming together until they thought they had 'found out a perfect plot' as the psalmist puts it. True, Jesus is pretty direct when they present their challenge, all wrapped up in flattery: 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites?' But his actual response is calm, reasonable, irresistible. 'Give to the emperor the things that are his, and to God the things that are God's.' The wind is taken out of their sails and they don't know what to say – so they go away!

Now look back to our first reading. Here Paul begins his first letter to the Thessalonians according to custom. Just as we begin "Dear", so Paul starts with a greeting and then, in accordance with another bit of convention says, 'We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers.' Now, it may have been convention to say thank you at the beginning of letters, but Paul makes something quite new of the custom. He is laying down a fundamental principle that comes from his faith. Everyone is a gift to us. Everyone brings us something of God's grace and goodness. We are to show our gratitude for everyone and everything because this helps us see the world as God does. Jesus is not, unlike the Pharisees, trying to trap them or make them look stupid. He is helping them see as God sees. He already sees them as beloved children of God and longs for them to find joy and freedom in the light of God.