



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2025 – 3 before Lent

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,
now and for ever.

Psalm 65

- 1 Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; ♦
to you that answer prayer shall vows be paid.
- 2 To you shall all flesh come to confess their sins; ♦
when our misdeeds prevail against us, you will purge them away.
- 3 Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there. ♦
We shall be satisfied with the blessings of your house, even of your holy temple.
- 4 With wonders you will answer us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation, ♦
O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.
- 5 In your strength you set fast the mountains ♦
and are girded about with might.
- 6 You still the raging of the seas, ♦
the roaring of their waves and the clamour of the peoples.
- 7 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth tremble at your marvels; ♦
the gates of the morning and evening sing your praise.
- 8 You visit the earth and water it; ♦
you make it very plenteous.
- 9 The river of God is full of water; ♦
you prepare grain for your people, for so you provide for the earth.
- 10 You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; ♦
you soften the ground with showers and bless its increase.
- 11 You crown the year with your goodness, ♦
and your paths overflow with plenty.
- 12 May the pastures of the wilderness flow with goodness ♦
and the hills be girded with joy.
- 13 May the meadows be clothed with flocks of sheep ♦
and the valleys stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing.

A reading from the book of Revelation, chapter 4

After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! And the one seated there looks like jasper and cornelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

'Holy, holy, holy,
the Lord God the Almighty,
who was and is and is to come.'

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

'You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.'

This is 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 Luke, chapter 8, verses 22-25.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel.

Gospel Acclamation

Reader: Alleluia!

ALL: Alleluia!

Reader: I am the light of the world, says the Lord,
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

ALL: Alleluia!

Reader: Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke, Chapter 8, verses 22-25

At the end:

Reader: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, O Christ.

Luke 8.22-25

One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A gale swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?'

A Reflection from Peter

Today's readings make an odd pair together. You could be forgiven for thinking that the first was written by someone in their twenties who had been at a rather extreme party and been pressed (whether accidentally or intentionally) into trying the latest party drug of choice. The resulting vision is certainly not easily digested. We're not unused to people being imagined as animals, but talking of the one on the throne being like 'jasper and cornelian' is a real head-scratcher!

After that, the Gospel reading is very much like the nightmare journey home after the party. Still not entirely sober, but not relaxed enough to fall asleep, the arrival of the storm is all the more terrifying. All you do know is that you are helpless. And Jesus, who might perhaps have some clue what to do, is asleep. What happens then makes you wonder whether the drugs are still at work: Jesus wakes up, rebukes the wind and the raging waves... First we had someone on a throne being like jasper and cornelian. Now we have Jesus, no less, rebuking wind and waves. All we know is that we would feel pretty stupid standing in a boat in the middle of storm saying, "Now wind, that's enough! Down, you wicked waves!"

Crazy: and yet we are all too well aware of persistent craziness all around us. It doesn't matter where you look – politics, diplomacy, education, health, management of the economy - we are surrounded by evidence of craziness, a kind of desperate flailing around trying to hold unstoppable forces at bay.

What is different here is that we are being directed beyond the craziness. The heart of the first reading shows us a scene of both rest and activity. God, who holds all things and gives life to all, is seated in the midst of the assembly. Those in the presence worship – in a constant wave of praise "Holy, holy, holy the Lord God the Almighty..." A constant wave, yes, but also stillness and rest.

The Gospel reading puts us back into the chaos and craziness – we could be at the Munich gathering of European leaders listening to the American Vice-President and Secretary for Defense – but Jesus intervenes. Jesus reminds us that even now, even in the midst of the craziness of the world, in the midst of our own anxieties and worries, God continues to make and remake the creation. Like the disciples, even as we know who it is that works for our good, we doubt, "who then is this?" Today is an invitation to us, perhaps particularly in this coming Lent, to set aside the craziness of the world and, once again, to find in God our refuge and our strength.