



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2025 – 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.

Psalm 1

1 Blessed are they who have not walked
in the counsel of the wicked, ♦
nor lingered in the way of sinners,
nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.

2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord ♦
and they meditate on his law day and night.

3 Like a tree planted by streams of water
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither, ♦
whatever they do, it shall prosper.

4 As for the wicked, it is not so with them; ♦
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgement, ♦
nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, ♦
but the way of the wicked shall perish.

A reading from Paul's letter to Philemon, verses 1-21.

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

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 14, verses 25-33.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel. Everywhere except Fitz introduces it with an Acclamation (the blue bit), and then we all use the introduction and ending (the green bit):

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Luke, chapter 14, verses 25-33

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Now large crowds were travelling with him; and he turned and said to them, 'Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

A Reflection from Hannah

It is said that Arthur Conan Doyle once sent a letter to twelve friends that simply read 'Flee at once, all is discovered'. A week later, all twelve of them had left the country!

What's the worst thing you ever did? Have you ever done something that just made you want to run?! That's the situation in the reading from Paul's letter to Philemon. Almost the whole book has made it into our lectionary this week, and it is a story of reconciliation, and the Gospel enacted. We're used to Paul explaining with words (sometimes many words!) what the work of Christ means in our lives, but this little letter between friends gives us an insight into the lived-out reality of practicing forgiveness- how it transforms daily decisions and commends values that are quite countercultural- then and now.

Onesimus *was* one of Philemon's slave workers, but he did something wrong (we're not told what) and ran away. At some point, Onesimus visited Paul in prison, became a Christian, and was then sent back to Philemon, with this letter. In it, Paul draws on the Christian understanding of community and identity- noting that Onesimus is a brother in Christ, equal and beloved. He also articulates the assumption of mutual forgiveness- which arguably puts a bit of pressure on Philemon, but nevertheless notices that we are called to a life of reconciliation with those who have done us wrong.

But there's more- radically more. We often talk in churchy language about 'imitating Christ', about living a 'cross-shaped life'. What does that mean in practice though? Well here, in this deeply love-filled letter, Paul does just that. More than simply asking, or even assuming that Onesimus will be forgiven by Philemon, he says that if there is anything still outstanding- anything that gets in the way of healing- it is to be accounted to Paul:

'If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.'

So Paul takes the place of Christ in being the one who reconciles, the one who takes on the debts, the one who does what Onesimus cannot do by himself.

In our culture today, the fear of being cancelled doesn't help our relationship with our own mistakes- we worry that if we get something wrong (especially on social media) we will be ghosted, deleted, forgotten. That from then on, everything else we've ever said or done will be negated and count for nothing. We certainly see this happen for celebrities and public figures, and the story I began with reminds us that we all have things we hide, that we fear being discovered. Yet this tiny tale of three characters in the early church who lived bravely in a counter-cultural way, challenges us about how we respond to broken relationships and how we can be channels of grace.