



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026 – 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 138

- 1 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; ♦
before the gods will I sing praise to you.
- 2 I will bow down towards your holy temple and praise your name,
because of your love and faithfulness; ♦
for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.
- 3 In the day that I called to you, you answered me; ♦
you put new strength in my soul.
- 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, ♦
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- 5 They shall sing of the ways of the Lord, ♦
that great is the glory of the Lord.
- 6 Though the Lord be high, he watches over the lowly; ♦
as for the proud, he regards them from afar.
- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will preserve me; ♦
you will stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;
your right hand will save me.
- 8 The Lord shall make good his purpose for me; ♦
your loving-kindness, O Lord, endures for ever; forsake not the work of your
hands.

A reading from the letter to the Romans, chapter 12, verses 1-8.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

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 Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13-20.

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.**

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 Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13-20.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

A Reflection from Dave

In Jesus' day, people were always watching. In the context of Roman occupation, and curtailed religious identity, people sought what they read about in the Old Testament scriptures - a promised saviour, God's anointed one - which is what Messiah means in Hebrew, and Christ in Greek. People were on the lookout!

And so Jesus must have known that people were watching him carefully. Hopeful people watched him as he publicly taught the crowds, and healed their sick - could he be the one? Nervous or suspicious people put him under surveillance, confronting him when they thought he broke their rules, even in private.

But what mattered to Jesus is what each person thought about what they saw. As he went amongst them, both publicly and privately, who did they think he was? The disciples were all willing to answer for what others thought - "they think you are some kind of prophet, like John the Baptist; Elijah or Jeremiah." Even today people give general answers about Jesus - "he's a wise teacher, a good man, an inspirational leader." But what mattered to Jesus was not what THEY say, but what YOU say - "who do YOU say that I am," he asks his disciples.

As usual, if there's an awkward pause, you can guarantee Peter will speak first. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." This was a bold claim - that Jesus was all the Old Testament promised, and a possible threat to the occupying Romans. Yet this is what Jesus was looking for - "Yes Peter, God has shown you who I am" - although not all that Jesus was looking for.

Because those who truly know Jesus have a responsibility to reveal that knowledge throughout their lives. Jesus tells Peter his identity is a key to his kingdom, but that living in that kingdom matters, in what we say and what we do, both publicly and privately. What we do on earth matters to God in heaven. As Paul in our Romans reading says, our whole selves - our bodies, minds, judgements, gifts and talents - all of these matter, because they have the power to reveal Jesus, or to deny him. What a responsibility, but also what a privilege!

Because even today, people are watching. In a world of disputed claims, fake identities, and manipulated images, people are looking for something authentic, something genuine. As people who believe in Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, when they see what we do, how we act, and hear what we say, that question remains for each of us - in all these things, who are we saying that Jesus is?