



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2026 – Trinity 15

COLLECT

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:
grant that your people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel
that, always abiding in you,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
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 103. 8-13

- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, ♦
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us, ♦
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, ♦
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, ♦
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, ♦
so far has he set our sins from us.
- 13 As a father has compassion on his children, ♦
so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.

A reading from the letter to the Romans, chapter 14, verses 1-12.

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written,

'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.'

So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

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 18, verses 21-35.

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 Matthew, chapter 18, verses 21-35.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Then Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

A Reflection from Peter

It may just be me, but, after driving under a bridge on the motorway and realising that there was one of those police radar vans on the bridge, I find myself waiting for the post with an extra degree of interest, if not concern. When nothing drops on to the mat after a couple of weeks I feel a distinct sense of having been exonerated, not to say forgiven. “That’s all right, then,” I think... (And this has nothing to do with whether I was driving over the speed limit or not; indeed, I usually can’t remember!)

When, in today’s Gospel we hear Peter’s question about the mechanics of forgiveness it seems rather similar. How many times are we to forgive? How many times are we to let other people off? Now forgiveness becomes a matter of the extent of my tolerance, or magnanimity. But if forgiveness is about being let off then surely we have it all wrong. That sense of liberation when the fixed penalty charge notice fails to appear is not about being accountable, but about avoiding accountability. Jesus’ parable is about both accountability and relationship. The king in the story shows both understanding and compassion. His action, rooted in commitment to the slave, gives a second chance. The king involves himself in the transaction. His forgiving of the slave is an expression of the king’s solidarity with the sinner: ‘we can do this together.’

The slave, however, misses all the important bits. He only gets as far as the sense of being let off and feels empowered. So he promptly goes and mistreats a fellow slave who happens to owe him money. It is immediately evident that he has not experienced the king’s generosity to him as forgiveness, but merely as being let off. The king’s heart was moved by the plight of the slave; the slave’s heart still seems to be made of stone.

And there is the challenge. Forgiveness is only real when we experience change in the heart – a change big enough to enable me to see the other in a new way. And when God forgives us? Does God also have to learn to see us in a new way? Of course not. This is the difference between human forgiveness and God’s forgiveness. When we receive forgiveness, or when we forgive others, we have to be changed. When God forgives us we are changed – not let off, but set free to understand a little better, to love a little more, to trust more deeply.