



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 2026 – Trinity 18

COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God,
increase in us your gift of faith
that, forsaking what lies behind
and reaching out to that which is before,
we may run the way of your commandments
and win the crown of everlasting joy;
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 80. 9-17

- 9 You brought a vine out of Egypt; ♦
you drove out the nations and planted it.
- 10 You made room around it, ♦
and when it had taken root, it filled the land.
- 11 The hills were covered with its shadow ♦
and the cedars of God by its boughs.
- 12 It stretched out its branches to the Sea ♦
and its tendrils to the River.
- 13 Why then have you broken down its wall, ♦
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?
- 14 The wild boar out of the wood tears it off, ♦
and all the insects of the field devour it.
- 15 Turn again, O God of hosts, ♦
look down from heaven and behold;
- 16 Cherish this vine which your right hand has planted, ♦
and the branch that you made so strong for yourself.
- 17 Let those who burnt it with fire, who cut it down, ♦
perish at the rebuke of your countenance.

A reading from the letter to the Philippians, chapter 3, verses 4b-14.

even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

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 21, verses 33-46.

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 21, verses 33-46.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

‘Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.” So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.’

Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord’s doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes”?

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.’

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

A Reflection from Dave

A youth group was once looking at the parable in our Gospel reading. The leader asked them to name a character from the story, and one child quickly answered "the Ant Farmer!" Confused, the leader asked what made them say that, to which they replied "that's what it says - The story of the Ten Ant Farmers!" Apparently it took a while to explain what a tenant was!

That was an honest case of mistaken identity, however at the heart of Jesus' parable is a much more serious mistake. The Pharisees and Chief Priests have been quizzing Jesus on his identity, and are dissatisfied with his answers. They are afraid that people think too highly of him, and of what he might do next. They mistakenly see him as a threat, and by the end of our passage want him arrested.

Jesus knows this, and so he reveals their mistake by telling his story against them. They are the Tenant Farmers, given responsibility for God's vineyard, which is his people. They fail to see that now is the time for harvest, and despite the prophets telling them they reject this again and again.

"And who am I?" says Jesus. He is the son God sends, the one they should respect. He is the cornerstone on which the kingdom is built, but they reject him as an annoying piece of rubble. Jesus' story reveals that their hearts are turned against him, that they plan to kill him and claim God's kingdom as their own. It's a devastating indictment. They thought they were on God's side, but Jesus shows they were badly mistaken.

And how easy it is to become mistaken about God's kingdom, and how serious the consequences! God's kingdom is not something to be grabbed at, fought over, or taken into our possession. When that language is used today, it mistakes a desire for a dominant Christian culture with the genuine kingdom of God. Like the religious leaders in Jesus' day, it misses the point.

Because instead, Jesus describes the kingdom of God like an abundant garden, something God gives "to a people who will produce its fruit." You can't grab it, but you can receive it. You can't fight to possess it, but you can tend and nurture it. It doesn't need protection from others, but its harvest is found in others, even those we least expect or accept.

It was no mistake that Jesus came as a rejected stone, a suffering son. Philippians encourages us to say with Paul, "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him." Even today, that is what it means to be part of God's Kingdom.