



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER 2026 – Trinity 20

COLLECT

God, the giver of life,
whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ
and make us eager to do your will,
that we may share with the whole creation
the joys of eternal life;
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.

Psalms 96. 1-9

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song; ♦
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- 2 Sing to the Lord and bless his name; ♦
tell out his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations ♦
and his wonders among all peoples.
- 4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; ♦
he is more to be feared than all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the nations are but idols; ♦
it is the Lord who made the heavens.
- 6 Honour and majesty are before him; ♦
power and splendour are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; ♦
ascribe to the Lord honour and strength.
- 8 Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦
bring offerings and come into his courts.
- 9 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; ♦
let the whole earth tremble before him.

A reading from the first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 1-10.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

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 22, verses 15-22.

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.**

We do not live by bread alone, but every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 22, verses 15-22.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

A Reflection from Hannah

In a context soaked in collective unrest, Jesus is invited into a trap. Disciples of the Pharisees (the religious establishment) and Herodians (those who supported the puppet king of the region) come to Jesus with a question. They flatter him, but they hope their question will quash Jesus' cause. They ask him 'is it lawful to pay taxes to the Emperor?'

If Jesus said 'yes' it could suggest he colluded with Roman occupation, and all those promises that seemed to mean change might be revealed to the crowds as empty. If Jesus said 'no' then that was insurrection- he could be accused of encouraging rebellion and arrested. 'No' would have suited the Pharisees and Herodians, because it would provide a mandate for dealing with him. 'No' might also have suited the followers of Jesus very well, who longed for freedom and an end to Roman rule.

It's no surprise to notice that Jesus made neither of those responses. He asks for a coin. The way Jesus looks at it reminds me of when you find a bit of lost property at school- it's as though he is examining it for the first time, looking for the name tab- 'well it's got Caesar's name on it, and he's even drawn his picture on the front, so give it back to him I guess...'

Cleverly, the main thing for the questioners has been shown to only be incidental to the real issue for Jesus- Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and... here's the punch-line- Give back to God, what is God's.

It's a pointed challenge. Give back to God, what is God's. What has been taken? Who has it? What, or who belongs to God? The coin had the face of Caesar on it. So often we can be distracted by that- thinking the face on the coin- human power- is the main thing. But the real question is what has the face of God upon it? Jesus is the answer- who hung upon the cross- humiliated and apparently defeated. Jesus, who rose again- that cross-shaped life is what belongs to God and bears God's image.

We too bear that image- we belong to God. In this season of harvest (still going!) we are also encouraged to remember that the whole earth belongs to God. Each tin, bag of pasta, cereal box represents an understanding that generosity is an expression of our belief that other people belong to God and we can share what we have for their wellbeing.

That challenge- 'give back to God what is God's'- is there for us to reflect on in every aspect of life. When we keep that in the middle, we've got a bit more hope of finding our place and our perspective as we contemplate the difficulties of the world today. Jesus talked of the kingdom of God being very near, being the only thing that mattered. We are invited to ask God to use us to join in with what really matters- to grow that kingdom, and to give us a light touch over all we own and are- because none of it is really ours, it belongs to our Lord- we give thanks, we offer it back.