

# Collect, Readings and Reflection for 10 August 2025, the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

## **Collect** *(the Church's prayer for today):*

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,  
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and  
govern  
both our hearts and bodies  
in the ways of your laws  
and the works of your commandments;  
that through your most mighty  
protection, both here and ever,  
we may be preserved in body and soul;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus  
Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

Lord God,  
your Son left the riches of heaven  
and became poor for our sake:  
when we prosper save us from pride,  
when we are needy save us from  
despair,  
that we may trust in you alone;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## **Readings: Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16; Luke 12:32-40**

*Today's reflection is by the Vicar, the Revd Canon Jonathan Cain.*

### **Faith: the antidote to fear and uncertainty**

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

Luke the evangelist puts the words ‘do not be afraid’ on Jesus’ lips several times in his gospel account. It is as if he saw into the hearts of his readers and foresaw that their, that our lives would be riven with uncertainty. On this occasion the little word ‘for’ in the middle of the sentence reveals why our fear is not warranted.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

The assurance might be easier to grasp if we consider the sentence the other way around:

Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom, which is why you should not be afraid.

The kingdom is of course the eternal realm where God is sovereign, where Jesus rules as king for ever; a place characterised by justice and mercy, where Jesus’ promises of forgiveness and eternal life are realised. This is the kingdom that God our Father has been pleased to give us, pleased to share with us, so there is no need for fear or uncertainty. Simple.

I suspect that we won't all be able to say amen at this point. I suspect that, in troubled times, fear and uncertainty might take a little more pushing away. If my suspicions are correct, then we are in good company. The letter to the Hebrews was written to a Christian community that were fearful. In the chapters that preceded our reading this morning, the author offers encouragement against compromise in the face of ridicule, encouragement against giving up in the face of evidence that seemed to suggest the kingdom of God was a lie. These early Christian communities were ruthlessly persecuted by the beating drum of a powerful Roman empire. To stand and witness to a different drumbeat was, at best, non-rational; most of the time such a witness seemed pointless and foolhardy. And so, we arrive at our passage this morning which begins with a definition of the antidote to fear and uncertainty – faith.

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

To make their argument, the author of the letter to the Hebrews goes on to reprise the stories of several heroes of the faith including Abraham, whose story we read in the book of Genesis.

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”

When Abraham received his call from God it came with a sevenfold promise. In Genesis chapter 12 God said to Abraham:

“I will make you into a great nation.”

“I will bless you.”

“I will make your name great.”

“You will be a blessing.”

“I will bless those who bless you.”

“Whoever curses you I will curse.”

“All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.”

And what is distinctive about these promises is that Abraham did not live to see them all realised. He may have experienced blessing; he may have known himself to be a blessing to others; he may have seen those who cursed him cursed – Egypt's Pharaoh for one. But Abraham did not witness a great nation – he lived as a wandering alien in a land ruled by others; he did not experience the greatness of his name – and yet we are still talking about him several millennia later; nor did he see the peoples of the earth blessed through him. Abraham did not see these things, but he lived by them. He lived as though they were true. He lived sure of what he hoped for and certain of what he did not see. This is the faith of Abraham about. As we read Abraham's story we can pick out five features of that faith:

1. Abraham's faith is responsive. When God calls, Abraham is eager to do what is asked of him.
2. Abraham's faith is sacrificial. When he leaves his home, Abraham leaves behind all that is secure, prosperous, peaceful and enjoyable.

3. Abraham's faith is courageous. He began his travels not knowing where he was to go.
4. Abraham's faith is persistent. He lived by the promises that God had made even though he did not see them realised.
5. Abraham's faith is dependent. His dependence on God is most clearly demonstrated by the miraculous conception and birth of his and Sarah's son Isaac, through whom God's promises were carried forward into subsequent generations.

This is the faith that the author of the letter to the Hebrews invites readers to be encouraged by. Responsive, Sacrificial, Courageous, Persistent, Dependent.

The concluding verses of the passage from Hebrews describes Abraham and other Old Testament heroes as "aliens and strangers on earth ... looking for a country of their own ... longing for a better country – a heavenly one." There is a sense in these verses of restlessness; of some innate sense that is discerning of something beyond that which we can see; some appreciation that what we can see is temporal and will pass away; some faith that what is of God and is eternal will endure. And this discernment makes their restlessness hope filled. This is faith.

So, what of our Christian community here. We don't face active persecution like our first century forebears in the faith, but we may experience ridicule. Much of our own society is at best ambivalent and at worst hostile to faith and this can leave Christian communities feeling socially isolated. The daily news often leaves us feeling like strangers and aliens in the world as it is, longing for something better and unable to answer the questions about why all this is happening.

Locally, we do feel compelled to respond to Jesus' commands to love and serve neighbour – to share the kingdom that the Father has been pleased to share with us. Here at St James' this call is evident through the work of the Parish Centre, Pantry and Shed, and, at different times we are fearful. Will we have enough? Will we be overwhelmed? How will this be sustained into the future? Is this making any difference? Is it worth bothering?

Friends ... Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom, which is why you should not be afraid.

Jesus and the writer to the Hebrews are clear. The antidote to our uncertainties and our fears is faith. Faith that responds, sacrifices, is courageous, persistent and acknowledges our utter dependence on God. May God who is forever faithful bless us all with such faith, which is our joy.

Amen.

