

# Collect, Readings and Reflection for 17 August 2025, the 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

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

Almighty God,  
who sent your Holy Spirit  
to be the life and light of your Church:  
open our hearts to the riches of your  
grace,  
that we may bring forth the fruit of the  
Spirit  
in love and joy and peace;  
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.  
Amen.

Gracious Father,  
revive your Church in our day,  
and make her holy, strong and faithful,  
for your glory's sake  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## **Readings: Hebrews 11:29—12:2; Luke 12:49-56**

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

### **Here come the young**

As many of you know our younger two boys, Bill and Charlie, are currently travelling together in Thailand. We receive regular updates of their adventures on WhatsApp, which is usually reassuring. The latest video however, of them knocking seven bells out of each other in a Thai boxing ring, did cause some concern. Pleased to say that no major harm was done – they both still have all of their teeth – and they are still friends but, as they weighed in with punches, it did look like some old scores were being settled. Family members are competitive, and they fall out ... no great surprise in that.

We hear a prediction of families falling out in our gospel reading today. It is no real surprise to read that fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law will be pitched against each other in conflict. I know that I do not see the world the way my parents did, nor do I see the world the way my children do, and I'm sure we will all have our own experiences of family disagreement to draw from. But we may find it surprising that these words are placed on the lips of Jesus. Here we have Jesus, the Prince of Peace, predicting that family members would be divided across the generations, because of him! Is Jesus to be the cause of such domestic disharmony? Well possibly. As ever, there may be more going on.

To the Jewish first hearers Jesus' words about inter-family and inter-generational conflict would have sparked a memory. They've heard something like this before ...

“For a son dishonours his father,  
a daughter rises up against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law –  
a man’s enemies are the members of his own household.” (Micah 7:6)

These are not the words of Jesus, but the words of the Jewish prophet Micah. Writing in a turbulent period of the history of Israel in the centuries before Christ, Micah, like many Jewish prophets wrote about the moral decay of his nation: the godly vanished, wrongdoing flourishing, the powerful abusing power, justice perverted by those who administered it. At a societal level, this was bad enough, but corruption had even infected the sacred bonds of friendship and family. Micah’s prophecy sounded then like looming disaster for the entire nation of Israel. Today, as in many other times in history, Micah’s prophecy sounds scarily relevant.

If we look at the Gospel reading without the link to Micah, Jesus’ words about intergenerational conflict sounds like a purely domestic matter. When we have Micah in view, the words are set against an epic backdrop.

Jesus speaks these words on his way to Jerusalem. The distressing baptism he must undergo is his crucifixion and resurrection. Epic stuff. The division that Jesus goes on to speak about in the passage will have been observed by Luke, the gospels author, among the communities to whom he was writing in the years immediately after Jesus. Division between those who accepted Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah and his call for the hardened hearts of God’s people to repent, and those who did not. Such division may not all have been along generational lines, but such division would impact families then, just as it does today.

Elsewhere in the gospels, perhaps anticipating or reflecting on family strife, Jesus says, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). These words were not intended to break family ties, but to and set up the Church, the community that would meet in Jesus’ name as a family. Later in Luke’s gospel account, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” (Luke 18:17). Here Jesus seems to suggest that the youngest members of a family have special insight.

As I reflected on this idea this week, I was reminded of a song, Here come the Young. The chorus includes the words ‘with open minds and hearts, inclusive from the start’. I’d like to share it with you now ...

Here come the young, Martyn Joseph, VIDEO.

The chorus lyric suggests that we are born naturally inclusive, and that something happens to us as we age which makes us less so. Tying this up with Jesus’ words, perhaps acceptance of the gospel truth that all are created in God’s image and worthy of dignity requires a childlike innocence, which is often compromised and lost with age and experience...

We cannot help but get older, but youthfulness is not all about age. Jesus does not say that only little children will enter the kingdom of God, but only those who receive the kingdom like a little child. It can be challenging to maintain a childlike openness and innocence as age, experience and corruptions in our culture harden hearts. Challenging – sadly, some minds are closed and hearts hardened at a young age, but not impossible.

Friends, as Micah wrote his lament and as Jesus approached Jerusalem, they mingled their words with seeds of hope: even in such desperate circumstances God will not fail those who put their trust in him. As we lament the troubles of our own time, may God bless us all with faith in what God has already done and hope about what God is yet to do. May God bless us with open minds and soft hearts. And with good family relationships too, where generations are open to and learn from each other.

Amen.

