

Sunday 20 September 2026
Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Collect:

God, our light and our salvation:
illuminate our lives,
that we may see your goodness in the land of the living,
and looking on your beauty
may be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading for this week:

Jonah 3:10-4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-6

Jonah is an anomaly, a prophetic book in the form of a narrative about the prophet, and one which does not show him in a good light. We enter it during its final scenes, after Jonah has already learnt once, twice, that God is a God of compassion, slow to anger and quick to bless – blessing even Israel’s traditional enemies, such as the Ninevites, when they repent and follow God’s path. Stubborn Jonah sits outside of Nineveh, waiting angrily for the city’s destruction, despite already admitting that he knows that God is merciful. Once again he is rebuked by God for having such a narrow understanding of divine mercy. His piety is parochial; he is unable to appreciate the depth and breadth of God’s willingness to forgive. Psalm 45, an acrostic psalm composed for the marriage of a king, acts as a foil to Jonah’s recalcitrance, singing praise to a merciful God.

We are beginning a short semicontinuous read through of Paul’s Letter to the Philippians. It is written from prison to a church he knows intimately and who has given him much strength. These verses, though composed during a time of incarceration, are full of life. The energy of the living Christ is coursing through him, but he is also aware that all is not well with the Philippians, and later in the letter he addresses some of the issues that are disrupting them. Paul’s profession that ‘living is Christ and dying is gain’ can be interpreted in many ways, but perhaps the most useful is that Christ is seen and heard through us.

The Gospel takes us back to God’s mercy, in this case with the parable of the generous employer who pays everyone the same, no matter how much of the day they have worked for. Those who grumble are echoing Jonah’s anger, sharing a similar inability to rejoice in the face of overwhelming generosity.

God our Father,
whose Son, the light unfailing,
has come from heaven to deliver the world
from the darkness of ignorance:
let these holy mysteries open the eyes of our understanding
that we may know the way of life,
and walk in it without stumbling;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Genesis 28:10-17; Psalm 103:19-22; Revelation 12:7-12; John 1:47-51
The Feast of St Michael’s and All Angels