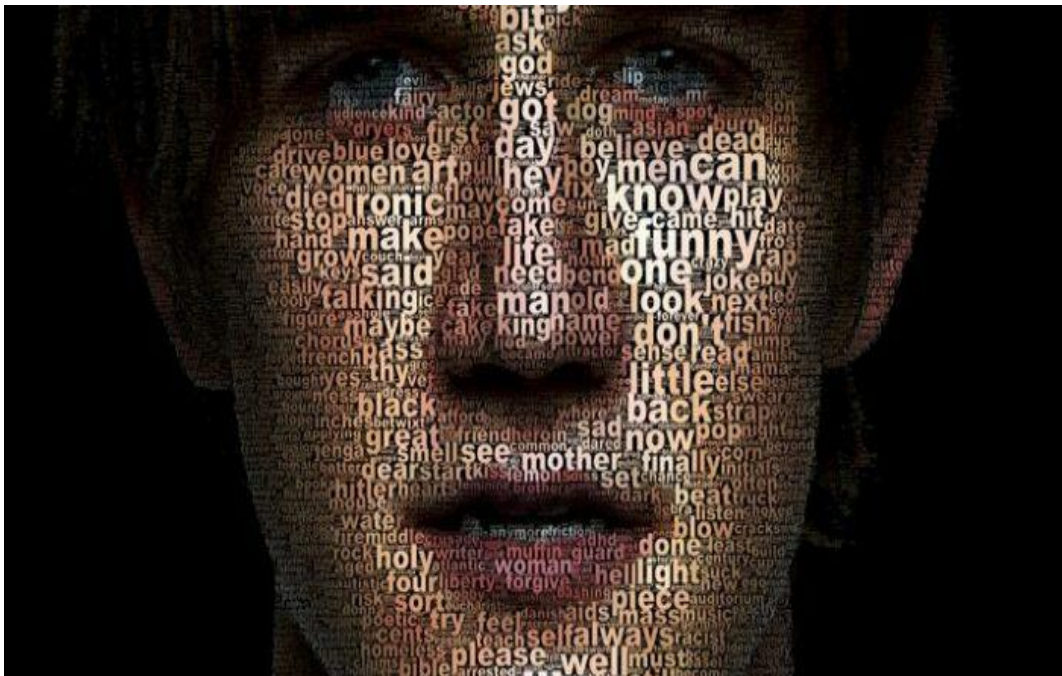


Reflections & Prayers for Sunday  
12<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity



StJohnsAL5

[www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)

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## Readings for this Sunday

***You may want to find your Bible and read the lessons set for this week:***

Isaiah 50: 4-9a

Psalm 116: 1-8

James 3: 1-12

**Mark 8: 27-end**

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

## Reflection by Anne Edwards

Words, words, words. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word." Genesis chapter 1: "In the beginning God" spoke. He spoke creation into being. Words – light, water, land, plants and fruit, the sun, moon and stars, birds and fish, animals and humankind.

Words have power. Words challenge – as did Jesus' question to his disciples. There had been quite a discussion going on once Jesus had called his disciples and he had become a wandering rabbi, gathering crowds, teaching and healing as he made his way from place to place. The scribes and pharisees were muttering – who is this man? The crowds were wondering too, speculating – was he a prophet, Elijah, perhaps, from the past?

Suddenly, instead of the scribes, pharisees and the crowds asking the question 'who is he?' it's Jesus asking the question. He asked the disciples "Who do people say that I am?" and the disciples respond with the suggestions being made by the crowds.

Then comes the show-stopping moment as he asks his disciples "But who do you say I am?"

Can you imagine the overwhelming silence as the disciples looked at one another, looked at their feet, looked around hoping someone would step into the breach and break the silence?

Let's imagine the scene – for days they have been walking with Jesus from place to place. Jesus has cured a deaf man, he's fed the crowds, the pharisees have demanded a sign, he's just healed a blind man in Bethsaida, and now he's making his way with the disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. A pretty relaxed scenario with the disciples chatting to one another in twos and threes.

Now the challenge. And eventually the silence is broken by Peter's words, "You are the Messiah". I wonder if he really knew what it meant – he may not have known then, but gradually as their journey took them to Jerusalem, the cross and resurrection, Peter came to understand, and it shaped the rest of his life.

Words shape our lives too – words said to us as we're growing up can have a long-lasting effect on children, teenagers, often blighting their lives. What about today's words? Words out in the public realm. Jane Williams in her Lectionary Reflections writes: "What if our increasingly wordy and foulmouthed world is actually choosing its destiny, with every word it utters?" As all our media sit increasingly lightly to the truth of what they report, they make truth something that we're no longer sure we can recognise.

More and more are casually using disgusting language, through Facebook and Twitter, etc. among other platforms, words putting people down, criticising what we do, what we look like. Our newspapers are full of gossip, especially in the world of 'celebrities'. What can we believe is the truth?

James is writing to a community of people who don't really think words matter. They think you can say religious words without them affecting their lifestyle, and you can say horrible things and still call yourself a Christian. James suggests that our words shape our future.

We think in words most of the time, and James points out that words can contaminate the stream of life – a stream either gives good water or bad – it can't do both.

The words we use, the words we read and are influenced by will either draw us closer to God or lead us further away.

In verses 34 and 35 Jesus makes it plain that living God's love, following Jesus, isn't easy. Jesus is startlingly honest. There will be times when we have to say 'no' to ourselves if we are to say 'yes' to Christ.

There is so much more in this passage from chapter 8 of Mark's Gospel and I encourage you to spend some time reading and pondering on the rest of Jesus' words. Words of life, words from 2000 years ago challenging our ways of living today.

## Prayers

### **Collect for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity**

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be steadfast in faith and active in service; 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 forever.

## Prayer

Lord, the disciples gathered around you, trying so hard to answer your question, and cope with the difficult news.

We ask your blessing as we seek to understand more of your story  
– your tough and challenging, but so good story! Amen

Lord, you knew what was going to happen to you.

You did not flinch or back away.

You calmly told the disciples – and us – what to expect.

Remind us constantly to look to you in the good and the tough times  
as we go through our days in your name. Amen

Lord, in this complex society of the twenty-first century,

we pray that we may think carefully before we speak,

that the words we use may build up and encourage,  
not harm or hinder, those to whom we speak.

May we remember Paul's words to the Philippians

to think of whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and  
praiseworthy,

so that our words bring light and life as we speak them out into the world. Amen

Lord, today we bring to you all those going through tough times,

especially those living in fear in Afghanistan and other parts of the world

– fear of war, persecution, imprisonment, death, refugees.

Help us remember that most people in the world do not live as we do

– food in the shops, a NHS, a roof over their heads, clean clothes on our backs

– and use us to play our part in answering our prayers. Amen

Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life,

and we have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.

Go with us out into your world day by day this week. Amen

## Parish Prayers for the week ahead

### In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer for:

Sunday            The Anglican Church of Tanzania

Monday           The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe – The Episcopal Church

Tuesday           The Diocese in Europe – The Church of England

Wednesday       The Diocese of Evo – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

Thursday	The Diocese of Exeter – The Church of England
Friday	The Diocese of Ezo – The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan
Saturday	The Diocese of Faisalabad – The (united) Church of Pakistan

**In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	Parish of Stopsley, St Thomas (Deanery of Luton)
Monday	Parish of Streatley (Deanery of Luton)
Tuesday	Parish of Sundon (Deanery of Luton)
Wednesday	Parish of Woodside, St Andrew, (Deanery of Luton)
Thursday	Parish of Bovington, (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Friday	Parish of Chipperfield, (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Saturday	Parish of Chorleywood, Christ Church (Deanery of Rickmansworth)

**For the homes and families in:**

Sunday	Collens Road, Cosne Mews
Monday	Crabtree Lane, Cranbourne Drive
Tuesday	Cravells Road, Croftwell
Wednesday	Cross Lane, Dark Lane
Thursday	The Deerings, Dellcroft Way
Friday	Dickinsons Field, East Common
Saturday	Eastcote Drive, Eastmoor Park

**The Sick:**

Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris, and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

**For the recently deceased:**

Beatrice Marsh, Enid Giles

**On their year's mind:**

Nancy Simpson, Joseph Barnard, Beatrice George, Winifred Binning, Kenneth Cross, Hugh Dickins, Cyril Fowler, Barry Williams.

## Church Opening times

### Other services / in Church congregation

- Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 5.00pm
- Sunday 9.30am Parish Eucharist
- Short Family service next Sunday 19 September at 4.00 pm

### Private Prayer

- Saturday and Sunday 11.00am – 4.00pm
- Wednesday 9.00am – 5.30pm

### A reminder... of this phone service:

**Daily Hope** – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

### Church at home:

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).