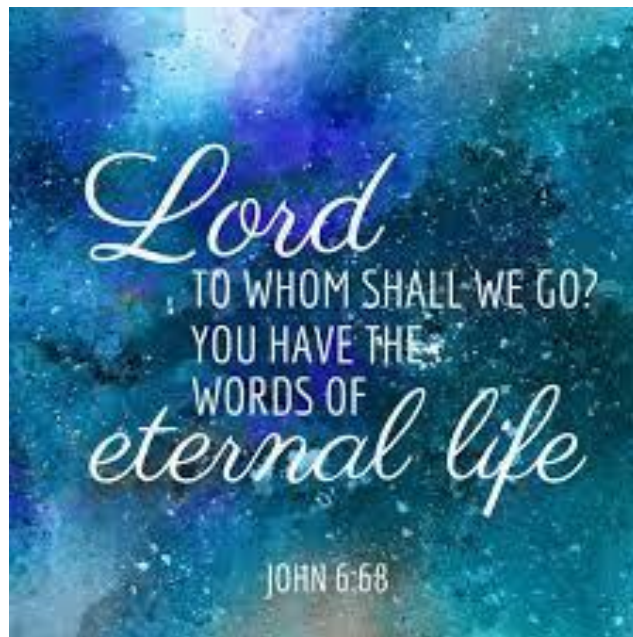




Readings, Reflection & Prayers
Twelfth Sunday after Trinity
22 August 2021



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Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to read in your bibles at home.

Joshua 24. 1-2a, 14-18

Ephesians 6. 10-20

John 6. 56-69

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So, Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

Reflection by Ven. Janet Mackenzie, Archdeacon of Hertford

Today's gospel reading concludes our series of readings from the sixth chapter of the gospel according to John. It marks a turning point in the response of the people to Jesus, the point where even many of those who have followed him from the beginning, those who had considered themselves his disciples, abandon him.

Until now, Jesus has been a popular man. He has been described as the hero of Galilee - the star from Bethlehem, the miracle worker, the man so close to God that he is able to feed over 5000 men, women and children with only five loaves of bread and two fish. But now after telling the people that his flesh and blood will satisfy them forever, they leave him. And as they go from him, they say to one another and to themselves: "This teaching is difficult - who can accept it?"

Indeed, it is a difficult teaching to accept, this teaching that Jesus is the bread of heaven and that through him comes eternal life for all who believe in him, all who follow him. But is this the reason that crowds leave him? Is this the reason that most of his disciples depart from his side? Or is it really, as Jesus said earlier in the chapter after they had all followed him across the lake to Capernaum? "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

Our living God is extraordinarily gracious and kind. He created us in his own image. He bestowed this world upon us to care for, to cherish and enjoy. God has also bestowed upon us a perfect freedom to do as we will - to love as we want to love, to live as we want to live, without interference - without restriction.

How God works is absolutely wonderful. God makes his sun rise on both evil and the good; God sends rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous. God cares for all that he has made and gives everyone every chance to get things right. And in return, all God hopes is that we in fact do come to love Him with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength and all our minds -- and to love our brothers and our sisters as we love ourselves.

God loves us - God is committed to us - and in that commitment, in that love, God doesn't give up on us, not even when we give up on him, not even

when we go our own way. God has never abandoned his world or his people and has always made it possible for us to approach him -- to be with him -- to enjoy him.

Indeed, God gives - freely - generously - and without asking much at all of us; only that we accept his gifts and try to follow in the path that he will show us -the way he has revealed to us in the law and the prophets and in his chosen one - the one we worship today - and that we be committed in that. It is not much to ask is it? Especially it is not much to ask, when you consider the question of Peter in today's gospel reading, "to whom else can we go?".

I believe and trust that we understand that there is earthly food which never completely satisfies and that there is heavenly food that endures forever. And I think we each want this heavenly food, but sadly, all too often our want lacks passion and conviction and will power. And this is a problem for those who think in worldly terms, and for the many who are the kind of believers who believe with their minds, but not with their hearts.

For Christ had an All or Nothing Message - a message about receiving life through him – or not. We are not called to be a people who follow Jesus only when it suits our taste, our understanding, or our desires.

Jesus asks us for a commitment; He asks us to be faithful to him as he is faithful to us - in the good times of our lives as well as in the bad. In his asking Jesus does not compromise. He does not water down his message so that it will be easier for us. He does not go chasing after the people who walk away from him, as did the crowd at Capernaum. Jesus does not change the truth so that his disciples will not leave him.

No - what Jesus does is proclaim what he came to proclaim. He comes to offer to us, as God has always offered us - a choice. The choice to live with him - in his care and under his love or to live without him and without the peace, the joy, and the strength that a relationship with him offers.

When we stand firm, when we refuse to compromise, when we sacrifice for the sake of the promises we have made, for the sake of those to whom we have pledged our love, for the sake of our relationship with God, we reap the abundant harvest of joy and peace that endures forever.

Those who confess that Jesus is the Holy One of God, those who realize, as Peter realized, that there is no one else to whom we can go, and those who listen to the words of eternal life that Jesus speaks and walk in his way, will see his glory. They will witness Christ returning in the way he went -- on the clouds - and in triumph, and they will rejoice!

Let us pray that we indeed walk that way.

Prayers

Collect for this Sunday

God of constant mercy,
who sent your Son to save us:
remind us of your goodness,
increase your grace within us,
that our thankfulness may grow,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Everlasting God

whose Spirit broods everlastingly over the lands and the waters,
and endows them with form and colour:
give us, we pray, the mind and heart
to rejoice in the majesty of creation.
Teach us to be responsible stewards of this world
and to seek the common good,
that through your blessing all may flourish,
and creation sing your praise
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Give us honest hearts, O God,
and send your kindly Spirit
to help us confess our sins
and bring us the peace of your forgiveness;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lord God, whose Son, Jesus Christ,
understood people's fear and pain
before they spoke of them,
we pray for those in hospital;
surround the frightened with your tenderness;
give strength to those in pain;
hold the weak in your arms of love,
and give hope and patience
to those who are recovering;
we ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer for:

Sunday	The Anglican Church of South America
Monday	The Diocese of Egba – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Tuesday	The Diocese of Egba West – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Wednesday	The Diocese of Egbu – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Thursday	The Diocese of Egypt – The Episcopal/Anglican Province of Alexandria

Friday The Missionary Diocese of Eha-Amufu – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Saturday The Diocese of Ekiti – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday Parish of Stotfold (Deanery of Hitchin)
Monday Parish of Wilbury (Deanery of Hitchin)
Tuesday Parish of Willian (Deanery of Hitchin)
Wednesday Parish of Biscot, Holy Trinity (Deanery of Luton)
Thursday Parish Bushmead (Deanery of Luton)
Friday Parish of Caddington (Deanery of Luton)
Saturday Parish of Farley Hill, St John the Baptist (Deanery of Luton)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday Tarrant Drive, Tiverton Court
Monday Topstreet Way, The Uplands
Tuesday Vallance Place, The Warren
Wednesday Walkers Close, Walkers Court
Thursday Walkers Road, Welbeck Rise
Friday Wensley Close, West Common
Saturday West Common Close, West Common Grove

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:

Brenda Guy, Joy Peak, Beatrice Marsh

On their year's mind:

Doreen Whitton, Clifford Peak, Eric Goss, Colin Stevens, Christine Simpson, Charles Costa, Sheila McMillin

Church Opening times

Other services / in Church congregation

- Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 5.00pm
- Sunday 9.30am Parish Eucharist
- Short Family service on 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).