

Last Sunday of Trinity

29<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Proper 25 **Green**



### **Collect**

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:1-8** English Standard Version (ESV)

#### **Paul's Ministry to the Thessalonians**

2 <sup>1</sup> For you yourselves know, brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> that our coming to you was not in vain. <sup>2</sup> But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. <sup>3</sup> For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, <sup>4</sup> but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup> For we never came with words of flattery,<sup>[b]</sup> as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. <sup>6</sup> Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we were gentle<sup>[c]</sup> among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. <sup>8</sup> So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

**Footnotes:** a. or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 9, 14, 17. b. or *with a flattering speech*. c. some manuscripts *infants*.

**COMMENT:** Paul expresses his gratitude for the warm reception he had received. Despite wariness at being mistreated in his previous mission in Philippi, he had boldly preached the gospel in Thessalonica and was deeply touched by their hospitality. Yet his message had also received considerable opposition there too. Apparently his opponents had sought to undercut his

ministry by making false accusations as to his purpose; so Paul felt it necessary to clarify his true motives. His only aim had been to proclaim the true gospel as God had given it to him, not the deceit, trickery or indulgent self-promotion of which he had been accused. He had carefully avoided the flattery and greed so common among other teachers of his time. Thessalonica had notable centres for the worship of two pagan sects, the Dionysiacs and the Cabeiri. These were Greek and Near Eastern mystery cults respectively. Both were known by their extended festivals with much drunkenness and phallic symbols expressive of sexual promiscuity. Sadly such behaviour has been mirrored by Christian Priests and Leaders who bring shame on themselves and cause others to despise the Christian gospel through their unethical behaviour resulting in sexual misconduct. In contrast, Paul's style had been rigorously ethical. Though he and his companions could have claimed support from the Thessalonians, they had not. Their behaviour had been as gentle as a nurse "tenderly caring for her own children" (verse 7). In fact, they had shared not only the gospel but themselves, which probably implies that they had been willing to participate in the life of the community to the extent of sharing their humble poverty. The extended biographical section of the letter (2:1-3:10), of which this is only a brief introduction, had a very real purpose: to remind the Thessalonians of Paul's recent visit as a substitute for his personal presence and to lay the groundwork for his subsequent exhortation (4:1-5:22). He was using their own experience of his ministry among them as the basis for calling them to a higher standard of behaviour and than their opponents as they await the return of Christ.

## **Matthew 22:34-46** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **The Great Commandment**

<sup>34</sup> But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

### **Whose Son Is the Christ?**

<sup>41</sup> Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, <sup>42</sup> saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." <sup>43</sup> He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, <sup>44</sup> "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? <sup>45</sup> If then David calls him Lord, how is he

his son?”<sup>46</sup> And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

**COMMENT:** Efforts to entrap Jesus continued, but he turned their challenges into teaching opportunities. Responding to a lawyer’s question, he stated the two great commandments: love God and love your neighbour. The answer Jesus gave was a common rabbinic summary as is revealed in Luke’s Gospel, where a lawyer recited the summary to Jesus; Luke 10:25-28 ‘And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” He said to him, “*What is written in the Law? How do you read it?*” And he answered, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.*” And he said to him, “*You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.*” ’ He also turned the Pharisees’ opposition against them by asking who the Messiah is. When they gave the typical Jewish answer, “*The Son of David,*” he confounded them by quoting a verse from Psalm 110. To the people of that time, the reference was obvious, but not to us. They believed that all the Psalms were written by David inspired by the Spirit. The point of telling the story was to show how Jesus confronted his opponents and used their own skill at interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures to silence them. One of the more consistent aspects of Jesus’ character reported in the four gospels was his understanding of the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures.

### **Psalm 1** *Beatus vir qui non abiit*

**℟ Happy is the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.**

<sup>1</sup> Happy indeed is the man  
who follows not the counsel of the wicked,  
nor lingers in the way of sinners  
nor sits in the company of scorners,

<sup>2</sup> but whose delight is the law of the Lord  
and who ponders his law day and night. **℟**

<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree that is planted  
beside the flowing waters,  
that yields its fruit in due season  
and whose leaves shall never fade;  
and all that he does shall prosper.

<sup>4</sup> Not so are the wicked, not so! **℟**

For they like winnowed chaff  
shall be driven away by the wind.

<sup>5</sup> When the wicked are judged they shall not stand,  
nor find room among those who are just;  
<sup>6</sup> for the Lord guards the way of the just  
but the way of the wicked leads to doom.

**R** Happy is the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** More an introduction to the Book of Psalms, this psalm portrays the kind of person who uses the whole collection as a spiritual handbook. It may well have been written especially for this purpose after a pious editor had copied by hand and edited all the psalms that follow it. The religious environment encapsulated here is that of the time when the influence of Ezra was manifest in the nation being regarded as a religious community, “the congregation of the righteous” in v.5. Best guesses by most scholars place it in the Greek period toward the end of the 3rd century BC. The two sections of the psalm contrast the character and destiny of the righteous (verses 1-3) and the wicked (verses 4-6). For the former, blessings and rewards abound; but for the latter, they are judged and disappear. Vivid metaphors in verse 3, “trees planted by streams of water,” and verse 4, “chaff that the wind drives away,” come straight out of Israel's rural environment. Flowing streams are treasured rarities and the wind is used to winnow grain at harvest time. The moral of the prose-poem is contained in verse 6: the destiny of both the righteous and the wicked is under constant scrutiny by God.

### **Post Communion**

God of all grace, your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry with the bread of his life and the word of his kingdom: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your true and living bread; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

### **The Blessing**

Christ the Son of God perfect in you the image of his glory and gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**