

Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost

27 September 2026

Sentence

Come, let us return to the Lord, that we may live before him. Hosea 6.1a, 2b

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good tidings, who publish salvation.
Isaiah 52.7

Collect

Grant, O merciful God,
that your people may have that mind that was in Christ Jesus,
who emptied himself, and took the form of a servant,
and in humility became obedient even to death.
For you have highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
Jesus Christ, the Lord;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, in everlasting glory. Amen.

1st Reading

Exodus 17.1-7

¹ From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' ³ But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?' ⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' ⁵ The Lord said to

Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.' Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'

Psalm

Psalm 78.1-4; 78.11-16

- 1 Give heed to my teaching, O my people:
incline your ears to the words of my mouth;
- 2 For I will open my mouth in a parable:
and expound the mysteries of former times.
- 3 What we have heard and known:
what our forebears have told us,
- 4 We will not hide from their children,
but declare to a generation yet to come:
the praiseworthy acts of the Lord,
his mighty and wonderful works.
- 11 For he did marvellous things
in the sight of their ancestors:
in the land of Egypt, in the country of Zoan.
- 12 He divided the sea and let them pass through:
he made the waters stand up in a heap.
- 13 In the daytime he led them with a cloud:
and all night long with the light of fire.
- 14 He cleft rocks in the wilderness:
and gave them drink in abundance
as from springs of water.
- 15 He brought streams out of the rock:
and caused the waters to flow down like rivers.
- 16 But for all this they sinned yet more against him:

and rebelled against the Most High in the desert.

2nd Reading

Philippians 2

¹ If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy,

² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without murmuring and arguing,

¹⁵ so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.

¹⁶ It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labour in vain.

¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you —

¹⁸ and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you.

²⁰ I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

²¹ All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

²² But Timothy's worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

²³ I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me;

²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.

²⁵ Still, I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—my brother and co-worker and fellow-soldier, your messenger and minister to my need;

²⁶ for he has been longing for all of you, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.

²⁷ He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.

²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, in order that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.

²⁹ Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honour such people,

³⁰ because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 21.23-32

²³ When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' ²⁴ Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?"' ²⁶ But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ²⁸ 'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." ²⁹ He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.