

Lectionary readings: Nehemiah 8:1-3,5-6,8-10 ; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a; Luke 4: 14-21

For reflection and prayer

- **Nehemiah 8:** People eagerly opened themselves to the Word of God and were ‘all ears’ as Ezra read to them. They realised they had neglected their relationship with God. Ezra praised God and everyone shouted ‘Oh Yes! Yes!’ with hands raised high. How do you respond to the Word of God? How might you get to know God better? Nehemiah said, ‘This day is holy to the Lord, your God’, a day for rejoicing. We don’t need to wait for a special occasion because every day is sacred. How about setting out on each day this week saying, ‘This day is holy to God’ and responding eagerly to God’s presence with you throughout the day?
- **Psalm 19:** The Psalmist says that the glory of God is all around us, that there is evidence of God for all to see. Why not open your eyes to see his glory and his presence in the world around you, in the circumstances of your life and in the people you meet? The Psalmist says that God revives us, gives us wisdom, fills us with joy, enlightens us, awakens compassion in us. If we open ourselves to God within us, ‘*Then shall I become a beneficial presence, freely and fully surrendered to God’s love.*’ (Psalms for Praying) May we bless people by our presence this week.
- **1 Corinthians 12:** We read of how the church, the Body of Christ, is strong when we are living together in love, in harmony with one another, acknowledging one another’s giftedness and giving thanks to God for one another. There is no room for labels in the church –

Scottish, English, American, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, homosexual etc. We all have an important place in the church; we are all inter-connected, all inter-dependent. If one hurts, we all hurt. If one flourishes, we all rejoice. This is the way of love. We must always err on the side of love.

- **Luke 4:** Jesus preached to the people in the synagogue in Nazareth and said he was chosen to give good news to the poor, to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to set free those who are burdened. We fit each category, for each one of us is spiritually poor; each one of us spiritually blind; each one of us is burdened with guilt, fears, anxiety etc; each one of us is bound in some way. And Jesus has come to set us free to be the person we can become by his grace. And the incarnation teaches us that we too have the same mission as Jesus, for we are each called to go out and set others free, to enable them to become fully human as Jesus was fully human.

A prayer

Living God, made known in Jesus Christ, and revealed in the power and presence of your Spirit, we rejoice that your word is living, vibrant, alive, filled with life, surprising people, challenging people, transforming people. You are still healing broken hearts; you are still calling people to live justly; you are still lifting the poor out of the gutter; you are still breathing life into people, filling people with hope, sharing our pain, speaking words of love and compassion, reaching out to all with the gift of freedom and wholeness. And all this you do through us. Lord, may we go out into this week in the power of your Spirit to be Christ to everyone we meet. Amen.