

## Monday 29<sup>th</sup> August

### Psalm 80

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth

**<sup>2</sup> before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us.**

<sup>3</sup> Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

**<sup>4</sup> How long, LORD God Almighty, will your anger smoulder against the prayers of your people?**

<sup>5</sup> You have fed them with the bread of tears;  
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.

**<sup>6</sup> You have made us an object of derision to our neighbours, and our enemies mock us.**

<sup>7</sup> Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

**<sup>8</sup> You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.**

<sup>9</sup> You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.

**<sup>10</sup> The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches.**

<sup>11</sup> Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River.

**<sup>12</sup> Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes?**

<sup>13</sup> Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it.

**<sup>14</sup> Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine,**

<sup>15</sup> the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself.

**<sup>16</sup> Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish.**

<sup>17</sup> Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,  
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

**<sup>18</sup> Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name.**

<sup>19</sup> Restore us, LORD God Almighty; make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.

### Acts 6

#### *The choosing of the seven*

<sup>6</sup> In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. <sup>2</sup> So the Twelve gathered

all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. <sup>3</sup> Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them <sup>4</sup> and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’

<sup>5</sup> This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. <sup>6</sup> They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

#### *Stephen seized*

<sup>8</sup> Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup> Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) – Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia – who began to argue with Stephen.

<sup>10</sup> But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

<sup>11</sup> Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.’

<sup>12</sup> So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. <sup>13</sup> They produced false witnesses, who testified, ‘This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. <sup>14</sup> For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.’

<sup>15</sup> All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

## Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> August

### Psalm 89;1-18

I will sing of the LORD’s great love for ever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

**<sup>2</sup> I will declare that your love stands firm for ever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.**

<sup>3</sup> You said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant,

**<sup>4</sup> “I will establish your line for ever and make your throne firm through all generations.”**”

<sup>5</sup> The heavens praise your wonders, LORD,  
your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.

**<sup>6</sup> For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD?**

**Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings?**

<sup>7</sup> In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared;  
he is more awesome than all who surround him.

**<sup>8</sup> Who is like you, LORD God Almighty?**

**You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.**

<sup>9</sup> You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.

**<sup>10</sup> You crushed Rahab like one of the slain;  
with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.**

<sup>11</sup> The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;  
you founded the world and all that is in it.

**<sup>12</sup> You created the north and the south;  
Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.**

<sup>13</sup> Your arm is endowed with power;  
your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.

**<sup>14</sup> Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;  
love and faithfulness go before you.**

<sup>15</sup> Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,  
who walk in the light of your presence, LORD.

**<sup>16</sup> They rejoice in your name all day long;  
they celebrate your righteousness.**

<sup>17</sup> For you are their glory and strength, and by your favour you exalt our horn.

**<sup>18</sup> Indeed, our shield belongs to the LORD,  
our king to the Holy One of Israel.**

## **Acts 7:1-16**

### *Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin*

<sup>7</sup> Then the high priest asked Stephen, 'Are these charges true?'

<sup>2</sup> To this he replied: 'Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. <sup>3</sup> "Leave your country and your people," God said, "and go to the land I will show you."

<sup>4</sup> 'So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. <sup>5</sup> He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. <sup>6</sup> God spoke to him in this way: "For four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated. <sup>7</sup> But I will punish the nation they serve as

slaves," God said, "and afterwards they will come out of that country and worship me in this place." <sup>8</sup> Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

<sup>9</sup> 'Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him <sup>10</sup> and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

<sup>11</sup> 'Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. <sup>12</sup> When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our forefathers on their first visit. <sup>13</sup> On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. <sup>14</sup> After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. <sup>15</sup> Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors died. <sup>16</sup> Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

## **Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> August**

### **Psalm 119;105-128**

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

**<sup>106</sup> I have taken an oath and confirmed it,  
that I will follow your righteous laws.**

<sup>107</sup> I have suffered much; preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.

**<sup>108</sup> Accept, LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws.**

<sup>109</sup> Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law.

**<sup>110</sup> The wicked have set a snare for me,  
but I have not strayed from your precepts.**

<sup>111</sup> Your statutes are my heritage for ever; they are the joy of my heart.

**<sup>112</sup> My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.**

<sup>113</sup> I hate double-minded people, but I love your law.

**<sup>114</sup> You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.**

<sup>115</sup> Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God!

**<sup>116</sup> Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I shall live;  
do not let my hopes be dashed.**

<sup>117</sup> Uphold me, and I shall be delivered;  
I shall always have regard for your decrees.

**<sup>118</sup> You reject all who stray from your decrees,  
for their delusions come to nothing.**

<sup>119</sup> All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross; therefore I love your statutes.

<sup>120</sup> **My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.**

<sup>121</sup> I have done what is righteous and just; do not leave me to my oppressors.

<sup>122</sup> **Ensure your servant's well-being; do not let the arrogant oppress me.**

<sup>123</sup> My eyes fail, looking for your salvation, looking for your righteous promise.

<sup>124</sup> **Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees.**

<sup>125</sup> I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.

<sup>126</sup> **It is time for you to act, LORD; your law is being broken.**

<sup>127</sup> Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold,

<sup>128</sup> **and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.**

### **Acts 7:17-43**

<sup>17</sup> 'As the time drew near for God to fulfil his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. <sup>18</sup> Then "a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt". <sup>19</sup> He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

<sup>20</sup> 'At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. <sup>21</sup> When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. <sup>22</sup> Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

<sup>23</sup> 'When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. <sup>24</sup> He saw one of them being ill-treated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defence and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup> Moses thought that his own people would realise that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. <sup>26</sup> The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, "Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?"

<sup>27</sup> 'But the man who was ill-treating the other pushed Moses aside and said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" <sup>28</sup> Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" <sup>29</sup> When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

<sup>30</sup> 'After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. <sup>31</sup> When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to get a closer look, he heard the Lord say: <sup>32</sup> "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

<sup>33</sup> 'Then the Lord said to him, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. <sup>34</sup> I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in

Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt."

<sup>35</sup> 'This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, "Who made you ruler and judge?" He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. <sup>36</sup> He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

<sup>37</sup> 'This is the Moses who told the Israelites, "God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people." <sup>38</sup> He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us.

<sup>39</sup> 'But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. <sup>40</sup> They told Aaron, "Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt – we don't know what has happened to him!" <sup>41</sup> That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and revelled in what their own hands had made. <sup>42</sup> But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the sun, moon and stars. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets:

"Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings for forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel?<sup>43</sup> You have taken up the tabernacle of Molek and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile" beyond Babylon.

### **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September**

#### **Psalm 92**

It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High,

<sup>2</sup> **proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night,**

<sup>3</sup> to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp.

<sup>4</sup> **For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD;**

**I sing for joy at what your hands have done.**

<sup>5</sup> How great are your works, LORD, how profound your thoughts!

<sup>6</sup> **Senseless people do not know, fools do not understand,**

<sup>7</sup> that though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed for ever.

<sup>8</sup> **But you, LORD, are for ever exalted.**

<sup>9</sup> For surely your enemies, LORD, surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered.

<sup>10</sup> **You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; fine oils have been poured on me.**

<sup>11</sup> My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries;  
**my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes.**

<sup>12</sup> **The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,  
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;**

<sup>13</sup> planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.

<sup>14</sup> **They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,**

<sup>15</sup> proclaiming, ‘The LORD is upright;  
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’

### **Acts 7;44-53**

<sup>44</sup> ‘Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. <sup>45</sup> After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, <sup>46</sup> who enjoyed God’s favour and asked that he might provide a dwelling-place for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup> But it was Solomon who built a house for him.

<sup>48</sup> ‘However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:

<sup>49</sup> “‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?’

<sup>50</sup> Has not my hand made all these things?’”

<sup>51</sup> ‘You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: you always resist the Holy Spirit! <sup>52</sup> Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him – <sup>53</sup> you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.’

### **Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**

#### **Psalm 97**

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.

<sup>2</sup> **Clouds and thick darkness surround him;  
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.**

<sup>3</sup> Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side.

<sup>4</sup> **His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles.**

<sup>5</sup> The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.

<sup>6</sup> **The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all peoples see his glory.**

<sup>7</sup> All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols –  
worship him, all you gods!

<sup>8</sup> **Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad  
because of your judgments, LORD.**

<sup>9</sup> For you, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth;  
you are exalted far above all gods.

<sup>10</sup> **Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his  
faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.**

<sup>11</sup> Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart.

<sup>12</sup> **Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.**

### **Acts 7;54-8;3**

#### ***The stoning of Stephen***

<sup>54</sup> When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’

<sup>57</sup> At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, <sup>58</sup> dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

<sup>59</sup> While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’

<sup>60</sup> Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.

8 And Saul approved of their killing him.

#### ***The church persecuted and scattered***

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

## **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September**

### **Psalm 95**

<sup>1</sup> Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;

let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

<sup>2</sup> Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

<sup>3</sup> For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.

<sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

<sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

<sup>6</sup> Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

<sup>7</sup> for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Today, if only you would hear his voice,

<sup>8</sup> ‘Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,

as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness,

<sup>9</sup> where your ancestors tested me; they tried me, though they had seen what I did.

<sup>10</sup> For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.”

<sup>11</sup> So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.””

### **Acts 8;4-25**

#### ***Philip in Samaria***

<sup>4</sup> Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. <sup>5</sup> Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. <sup>6</sup> When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup> For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was great joy in that city.

#### ***Simon the sorcerer***

<sup>9</sup> Now for some time a man named Simon had practised sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, <sup>10</sup> and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, ‘This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.’ <sup>11</sup> They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Simon himself believed and was baptised. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

<sup>14</sup> When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. <sup>15</sup> When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

<sup>18</sup> When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money <sup>19</sup> and said, ‘Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’

<sup>20</sup> Peter answered: ‘May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup> You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup> Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.’

<sup>24</sup> Then Simon answered, ‘Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.’

<sup>25</sup> After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.