

MONDAY
23 AUGUST
1 Thessalonians
1:1-5. 8-end
Psalm 149:1-5
Matthew 23:13-22

TUESDAY
24 AUGUST
Bartholomew the Apostle
Isaiah 43:8-13 or
Acts 5:12-16
Psalm 145:1-7
Acts 5:12-16 or
1 Corinthians 4:9-15
Luke 22:24-30

WEDNESDAY
25 AUGUST
1 Thessalonians
2:9-13
Psalm 126
Matthew 23:27-32

THURSDAY
26 AUGUST
1 Thessalonians
3:7-end
Psalm 90:13-end
Matthew 24:42-end

FRIDAY
27 AUGUST
1 Thessalonians
4:1-8
Psalm 97
Matthew 25:1-13

SATURDAY
28 AUGUST
1 Thessalonians
4:9-12
Psalm 98:1-2. 8-end
Matthew 25:14-30

REFLECTION

Glancing at this week's Gospel readings we'd be forgiven for thinking we're already in Advent rather than August. All these parables from Thursday to Saturday highlight the need to be prepared, ready for the Lord's return, even though we don't know when that will be.

Other readings this week consolidate themes from earlier this month. Celebrating Bartholomew on Tuesday, we again hear Jesus caution his disciples against wanting to be the greatest, echoing what he said last week. He himself came to serve, he tells them, and he would do so by laying down his life for others. In his scathing criticism of religious hypocrites (in Monday and Wednesday's readings) we're reminded that Jesus practised what he preached.

As we don't know when he'll return, Paul reminds us on Saturday to love our brothers and sisters while we wait and remain firm in faith (Thursday) – the faith that, as Jesus said in Matthew 17, can move mountains.

August may be drawing to a close, Advent may be a while off, but by serving others we can bear witness to him, as Bartholomew and Paul did, today and every day.



St Bartholomew, by Rembrandt van Rijn, c. 1661

PRAYER

Loving God, your care for us remains constant whatever the month or the season. As summer draws towards its end in the northern hemisphere, and winter retreats in the south, we give you thanks for your eternal and never-changing love.

THE THEOLOGY OF ST PAUL

PART I – WHO WAS PAUL?

For the next four weeks Becky Mynett will be looking at St Paul, his life and theology.

Without St Paul, we may never have heard of Jesus, far less consider him to be the son of God. Paul's influence on Christianity was crucial to its development from a minor Jewish sect to the world religion it is today.

Paul was born in Tarsus, in modern-day Turkey, at around the same time Jesus was born. He was Jewish and (like many Greek-speaking Jews) he also used a Jewish name, Saul. According to Acts, he was a Roman citizen, but he was also a Pharisee, which means he followed the Jewish Law in the strictest possible way. According to Acts, Paul was brought up in Jerusalem and studied under Gamaliel, the leader of the Pharisees, but most scholars now think he was brought up in Tarsus (although he may have studied in Jerusalem later). In any case, Paul did not follow Gamaliel's advice to leave Jesus' followers alone; in his letter to the Galatians, he admits that he was initially a violent persecutor of the Church.

Despite opposing his early followers, Paul never met the pre-resurrection Jesus. His teaching and message were rooted in a mystical experience of the risen Christ. This famously took place on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul says that he saw Jesus, while in Acts it says that he saw a blinding light and heard Jesus' voice. Whatever form it took, this experience would lead Paul to travel around the north-eastern Mediterranean, taking the Gospel out through Asia Minor to Greece and Rome, visiting early Christian communities and founding new ones. It also led Paul to write numerous letters to those communities, some of which are in our Bibles today, and some of which are now lost.

Next week we will look at which New Testament letters were written by Paul, and which of those traditionally attributed to him were probably written by later followers.

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LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by Caroline Hodgson and Heather Smith



Church of the Immaculate Conception, Connellsville, Pennsylvania. Nancy Bauer / Shutterstock.com

Twelfth week after Trinity

Monday 23 August to Saturday 28 August 2021

WEEK