Devotional Reflection, Friday, August 21, 2026
Proper 15, the week of the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Opening Up Your Heart

Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:
35 Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; 38for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 39And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

You will find the full text of today's Gospel at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (BCP, *981)*
AM Psalm 140, 142; PM Psalm 141, 143:1-11(12)
Job 2:1-13; Acts 9:1-9; John 6:27-40

David's Reflections

Van Morrison begins his song "The Mystery" with these lines.
Let go into the mystery
Let yourself go.
You've got to open up your heart
That's all I know. #
Jesus' words in John call us to unconditional openness to God. Old Testament scholar James Smart once wrote, "Faith is (our) man's unconditional openness to God and where it is present in the slightest degree the power of God that can move mountains is present."*

Where in our lives do we exercise unconditional openness to God? I think of receiving Holy Communion. The worshippers extend their hands toward the presider at the table who places bread on their palms and says "The body of Christ, the bread of heaven," or "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life." As someone has observed we could be saying silently within, "Out with sin, out

with self," when we extend our hands, and "In with Christ," as we move the wafer to our mouths.

The opening of our mouths speaks of the opening of our hearts to Christ. Jesus is the bread of heaven. The heart feeds on him just as we receive nurture from daily food. That feels like unconditional openness. The body must receive nutrition or it will suffer illness, deformity, and ultimately death. We are totally dependent on what we are eating to live. The food may have been purchased at the super market or farmer's market, but God gave the life to the flora and fauna, God gave the sun and rain from heaven, God put the nutriments in the soil, God gave the life to those who harvested and slaughtered and packaged, and God created the fossils that became the fuel for the farm implements and for the transport that hauled the prepared items to the store.

Jesus is the bread of heaven. Only by unconditional openness to him can we experience eternal life. He remains the supreme source of soul-nurture, of forgiveness, of deliverance, of transformation, of strength to live, of life. In the baptismal liturgy, the baptismal candidates answer this question, "Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?" And this one, "Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?" And this one, "Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?" The answer-- "I do."

Are those our answers today? Will they be tomorrow? It's not that we are somehow hanging on to God. Rather, it is that we remember each day that God is hanging on to us and that our faith, inconsistent as it may be, arises each day exactly because God is holding on to us. As Marcus Mumford sings in Mumford and Sons song "Hopeless Wanderer," as though singing to God, "Hold me fast, 'cause I'm a hopeless wanderer." @

Remember verses 37-39: Jesus says, "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day"

Henri Nouwen has spoken eloquently of Jesus' presence in Holy Eucharist as an expression of his presence in all of life. "Jesus is God for us. God with us. God within us. Jesus is God giving himself completely, pouring himself out for us without reserve. Jesus doesn't hold back or cling to his own possessions. He gives all there is to give. 'Eat, drink, this is my blood . . . this is me for you." +

Later in his song, Van Morrison sings, "When you open up your heart, you get everything you need." Jesus, who gave yourself for us, grant us grace today to keep our struggling against you at a minimum. Open our hearts even more fully to the mystery.. Thank you for never driving us away or giving up on us. Thank you for giving yourself unconditionally for us and to us. Let us respond by giving ourselves unconditionally to you and for you. *Amen.*

#Van Morrison, CD *Poetic Champions Compose*. (Exile Productions, 1987)

* James D. Smart, *The Quiet Revolution: The Radical Impact of Jesus on Men of His Time* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), p. 90.

@Mumford and Sons, from the Album "Babel."
http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/mumfordsons/hopelesswanderer.html

+ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), p. 67.

Collect of the Day, Proper 15, the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 233)

A Collect for Fridays
Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: Grant to us your servants so to follow in faith where you have led the way, that we may at length fall asleep peacefully in you and wake up in your likeness; for your tender mercies' sake. *Amen.* (BCP, 123)

For those in the Armed Forces of our Country
Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 823)

In the Evening
O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. *Amen.* (BCP, 833)

A Collect for Mission
O God and Father of all, whom the whole heavens adore: Let the whole earth also worship you, all nations obey you, all tongues confess and bless you, and men and women everywhere love you and serve you in peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 124)

Daily Office Gospel, John 6:27-40
27Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' 28Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' 29Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' 30So they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." ' 32Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33For the bread of God is that which* comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' 34They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

35 Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; 38for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 39And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer
Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *The Book of Common Prayer*
Noonday Prayer, page 103, *Book of Common Prayer*
Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p 109, *Book of Common Prayer*
Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*

Compline (Night Prayer), page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*
Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*