

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 29 March 2020

Lent 5

Welcome to our Prayers and Reflections for use at home on Lent 5, Sunday 29 March 2020. Jesus is drawing close to Jerusalem; the cross is in sight. Passiontide has begun.

Sharing in the same thoughts and prayers on a Sunday is one of the ways that we will remain connected across our churches and villages in these very disorientating times. We are - and will always be - God's beloved family in this place.

I hope that the Prayers and Reflections will meet you where you are, this Sunday, and help you to journey on with confidence towards Holy Week and Easter. Our next edition will be out for Palm Sunday.

God bless you and all your loved ones.

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LENT 5 - PASSIONTIDE**

PREPARING OURSELVES

*Take a moment to be still in God's presence,
and feel his love. If you are indoors,
you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love,
here, in your room. You may also wish to have a cross in your palm,
or on the table.*

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Pour out your love upon me,
make my heart beat in time with yours;
in Jesus' name,
I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

*If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets,
with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them
to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening
words of this well-known hymn.*

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

Feel God's forgiveness. You are his beloved child, nothing can separate you from his love. May this thought inspire you in the week ahead to speak words of love and peace and hope.

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER (The Collect)

Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our loving Father.

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Pause for a moment to contemplate this image - the cross, and Jesus bravely walking on into to Jerusalem, to save us - to draw us into the circle of God's love.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but may have eternal life.

John 3:16

Picture your name and those of your family and church friends written on the cross with love. Feel yourself united - at one - with them, safe in Jesus' saving arms, and give thanks to God for his deep love.

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Our first reading speaks of God's power to breathe new life into us when we feeling far from his love.

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O LORD God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

So I prophesied as I had been commanded...

And, of course, when Ezekiel spoke, the bones came back to life - but not because of anything that he did or said. It was the power of God's Spirit working through his words that brought new life and fresh hope where there was none. The people of God were in exile.

*It's such a poignant and moving reading for our disturbing and disorientating times, when we have lost much of our daily life and social connection. We can no longer pop into our neighbour's home, or into God's house. God's Spirit has the power to guide us through this valley of the shadow of death. He can hearten us so we - in turn - can encourage others by our timely phone calls, our thoughtful texts and messages. **Who is he inviting you to call this week?***



A Prayer in Response

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.

Amen.

Edwin Hatch (1835-1889)

Our second reading shows us the power of Jesus' own words.

Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother (Lazarus) would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

... Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'

And, of course, he did come out of the grave - restored to life.

*Not a resurrection, Lazarus would die again, but a sign of who Jesus is (God's Son) and the absolute power of his words. **What words do you need from him?***

In the calm stillness of your room or garden, listen to him. Let the peace of this moment, breathe calm into you. Sense his words spoken to you in love.

When we hear the name "Martha", we think of a capable woman bustling around in the kitchen. But - in our reading from John's Gospel - we see someone who has a deep faith. She believes in Jesus, and hopes in the resurrection, before the momentous and life-changing events of Holy Week and Easter. What trust is this.

*Pause and place you trust in Jesus,
even if you cannot see how or when
your problems, or our world's crisis,
will be solved.*

All shall be well, all shall be well...
For there is a Force of love moving
through the universe that holds us fast
and will never let us go.

St. Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)



PRAYERS FOR PASSIONTIDE

Here are some prayers as Passiontide begins. Feel free to use one or more of these prayers, and to add your own.

Holy God - breath of life,
breathe your endless life into me,
deepen my trust and faith;
breathe your energy into me,
uplift me when my own spirits flag;
breath your inner peace into me,
calm my fears and worries,
and guide me to your safe haven.

Breathe into me - so that I may live in you.

Holy God - word of life,
speak deep within my heart,
so that I may hear the words I crave;
speak into my daily living,
so that I may say the words others crave.

Breathe into me - so that I may live in you.

Holy God - well of life,
pour your wisdom into governments and leaders,
scientists and researchers, as they respond to the crisis;
pour your strength into doctors, nurses, paramedics and carers,
as they treat the sick and care for the vulnerable;
pour your life-sustaining breath into all who are sick,
whether in body, mind or spirit, as I name to you...
pour your thoughtfulness into our villages,
for ours are the hands and voices with which you will bless
our neighbours with love and ease loneliness.

Breathe into me - so that I may live in you.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer of Blessing

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

Lord, bless and guide me,
whatever I do, whether at home or outside.
Go before me, watch over me,
and keep me, and my loved ones, safe in your love. **Amen.**