

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 15 December 2024

Advent 3

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Last week, we met with John the Baptist in the wilderness. Today, as our Advent journey continues, we will be exploring his challenging message to God's people, ourselves, and our world today. It is all in readiness for our Lord's coming as Christ our King.

May you be inspired to seek justice this Advent!

Every blessing,

Revd Katrina

Vicar

Phone No. 01604 812907

Mobile No. 07710 464675

E-mail: katrinahutchins94@yahoo.co.uk

Some of the material is © The Archbishops' Council 2005, 2014



*As you prepare to listen to God's call for justice,
open your heart to him.*

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake, and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings.

Charles Coffin (1676-1749)

trans. John Chandler (1806-1876)

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Advent 3
Changed by God

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 bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.
You know all that is on my heart,
every one of my worries.
Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.
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, when you are ready, reflect on your life with the second verse from this week's hymn.

Then cleansed be every breast from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
prepare we in our hearts a home,
where such a mighty guest may come.

Charles Coffin (1676-1749)
trans. John Chandler (1806-1876)



If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.

In the lead up to Christmas, if you are expecting family to come to you, you'll be busy preparing your home - cleaning all through the house, putting fresh linen on the guest beds, decorating your Christmas tree, switching on the fairy lights, buying and wrapping all of the presents, and getting in the festive fare. Yes, there is lots to do to be ready to celebrate Christmas at home.

And, we should be as prepared in our hearts to receive our Lord on Christmas morn. Take some time to think about what is on your heart, on your conscience at this time. If there is anything weighing you down, share this with God's Spirit and seek his guidance. Feel him freeing you to walk more closely... more openly... more bravely... with the one who came to be our Saviour King.

Our Lord came to inspire us by his teaching and by his way of life. He came to save us and change us by his love and forgiveness. As you ponder this, say or sing this next verse of our Advent hymn.



For thou art our salvation, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without thy grace we waste away,
like flowers that wither and decay.

*Charles Coffin (1676-1749)
trans. John Chandler (1806-1876)*

Isaiah captured this idea so beautifully in his song of praise.

Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust and not be afraid.
The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defence;
he has become my salvation.

Isaiah 12:2

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly circle of prayer to our Faithful One.

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

John the Baptist called God's people out into the wilderness to seek God's forgiveness for the way that they had been living their lives, and then to go back home promising to live by God's rules. It reminds me of these opening lines of the Book of Common Prayer's General Confession.

Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.

We have followed too much the devices and desires
of our own hearts.

We have offended against thy holy laws.

We have left undone those things
which we ought to have done.

And we have done those things
which we ought not to have done.

Book of Common Prayer

To be able to live as our Advent 3 Collect is inviting us to live, we have to let go of our own devices and desires, and consider the needs of those who are struggling with the injustices of life. We have to be more like John the Baptist or our Lord, and be a prophetic voice in the world today. Speaking up for others, speaking out about injustice takes a real passion, a desire for change. It also takes courage and a willingness to join with others in making a difference. It can be costly to us.

Think about the causes you have championed over the course of your life, and how your heart was stirred to do this. You may still be holding one of these issues on your heart and in your prayers. You may still be working to see change or to offer compassion and concern. Bless you for your love and your commitment to this cause. Listen to what God's Spirit is saying to you as you contemplate the inspirational words of this week's Collect. When you are ready, respond with this next verse of our Advent hymn.



To heal the sick stretch forth thine hand,
and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth and let thy light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more.

*Charles Coffin (1676-1749)
trans. John Chandler (1806-1876)*

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

John says, 'Change your ways!'

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe has been laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.'

'What should we do then?' the crowd asked.

John answered, 'Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.'

Even tax collectors came to be baptised. 'Teacher,' they asked, 'what should we do?'

'Don't collect any more than you are required to,' he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?'

He replied, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely – be content with your pay.'

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, 'I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them. *Luke 3:7-18*

Praying for change...

John's message seems to have really touched the hearts and consciences of the people. Each one of his challenges is a call to obey our Lord's second commandment, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Firstly, to those in the crowd who live ordinary lives, with not a lot to spare, he says, 'Share what you have with those who are cold and starving.' Secondly, to those who are contributing to the social injustice - the tax collectors, the Roman soldiers - he says, 'Do your job fairly.' He is encouraging them to be the change that God would like to see in this occupied state. Which, I imagine, can't have been easy. Think of the jibes of their colleagues who think that their friends have gone soft. But... perhaps... in time... they too will begin to wonder about the impact of their actions.

Ponder who needs to change their ways in our world today. Who is causing the injustice we see in the news? Wonder about who might be the catalyst for change in one or more of these situations. Pray for them. Pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.



All praise, eternal Son, to thee
whose advent doth thy people free,
whom with the Father we adore
and Holy Ghost for ever more.

*Charles Coffin (1676-1749)
trans. John Chandler (1806-1876)*

OUR PRAYERS

Feel free to use one or more of these prayers and to add your own.

Lord Jesus, you invite me to follow your example and be one who notices those in need of my love and kindness, my compassion and concern. May my words reflect your love in me.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you call us to act justly, love kindness and walk humbly with you our King. May your words trigger the conscience of the leaders who are responsible for our world's suffering. In love, I lift up to you...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you saw the poverty in the ordinary towns and villages, and - like John - you encouraged the people to be generous with the little they have. May your words inspire sharing at Christmas.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

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.

O God, you search me and you know me,
all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,
you see the paths I will take before I take them. Guide my daily living.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**