

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 22 December 2024

Advent 4

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Our journey through Advent is drawing to a close. On this final Sunday, we come to Mary's story of courageous faith. She was willing to allow God to disrupt her life so that his Messiah could come and transform lives. It was a truly brave 'Yes, let it be to me.'

May you be inspired by her joy and her courage!

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 wonder at Mary's courage,
and her quiet faith, open your heart in praise.*

With Mary let my soul rejoice,
and praise God's holy name -
his saving love from first to last,
from age to age, the same!

David Mowbray (b. 1938)

based on Luke 1:46-55

CCLI reported

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Advent 4
Quietly courageous... Quietly joyous...

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.

How strong his arm, how great his power!
The proud he will disown;
the meek and humble he exalts
to share his glorious throne.

David Mowbray (b. 1938)
based on Luke 1:46-55
CCLI reported



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

Whilst Mary's song is speaking of God's bias to those who are lowly in life, and his call is to the world's rulers to change their exploitative ways, this verse is an invitation to examine our own consciences. It is a call to let go of our own pride (and how this might result in us saying things which put down others) and be even more gentle in our walk through life. Humility, according to St. Benedict, is how we draw closer to our God who wants us to be at one with him. It is to tune ourselves into our Lord's Spirit and his desire for our lives.

Take a moment to reflect on your daily walk through life. Notice... your gentleness... acknowledge this and recognise where God is in this... notice... any signs of pride or of seeing yourself better than others... take ownership of this and seek our Lord's help in letting go... so that you feel in tune with our God of love.

When you are ready, seek God's gentle love and gracious forgiveness through the words of our next verse.



The rich our God will send away
and feed the hungry poor;
the arms of love remain outstretched
at mercy's open door.

David Mowbray (b. 1938)

based on Luke 1:46-55

CCLI reported

We sense the depth of God's love for us in these beautiful words praising how well he knows us.

O Lord, you have searched me out and known me;
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

Psalm 139:1

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.

Eternal God,
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,
so we wait for his coming in glory;
bring us through the birth pangs of this present age
to see, with her, our great salvation
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer invites us to picture Mary in her nine months of waiting: waiting on Joseph and with Joseph, waiting with her cousin Elizabeth, and on her own, waiting on the birth of her special Son. Being a first-time mum is hard enough, but to be the centre of so much attention - she was after all unmarried as her pregnancy began - would have been tough. Yet, she also had the secret knowledge of who her Son will be. The Son who she sang about in her song (the Magnificat). The awe and wonder of this is simply joyous. You can almost feel this bubbling up inside Mary as she pondered the angel's visit and her gentle 'Yes, let it be to me.'

As you ponder her emotional time of waiting, think about how this mirrors or echoes your joy in our Lord and his expected return as King. Let her story fill you with fresh excitement at what God is doing through her Son who is his Son.



So shall God's promise be fulfilled,
to Israel firmly made:
a child is born, a Son is given
whose crown will never fade.

David Mowbray (b. 1938)

based on Luke 1:46-55

CCLI reported

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

My soul rejoices...

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!'

And Mary said:

'My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me –
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants for ever,
just as he promised our ancestors.'

Luke 1:39-55

Quietly courageous... Quietly rejoicing...

Mary's visit to Elizabeth will have given her added courage. Elizabeth recognises that Mary's baby is the long-promised Messiah. Ponder this, feel the wonder in this Spirit-filled meeting. Joy and excitement will have bubbled over in both mums-to-be. It is so hard to put this into words as both will have felt so unworthy of such special regard by their LORD.

Up until this visit, I imagine that Mary had to hold her joy in. No one, apart from Joseph, will believe that the baby she is carrying is God's special one. She can't let her inner glow shine in her eyes or play across her face. Being with another mum-to-be blessed by God's gift of a son gives Mary permission to let her joy flow freely in the safety of Elizabeth's home. Elizabeth understands. She believes.

You can feel the joy in Mary's song. You cannot but let your spirit soar with hers, and rejoice at what God is doing to right the world's wrongs. Mary's Son will be a perfect King who rules with love and compassion, with justice and peace. All that is wrong about life under Roman occupation will come under his scrutiny. All leaders will be accountable to our Lord and King. Those lowly in life... those broken by life... will feel God's love shining out of Jesus' eyes and surging through his touch.

Mary's joyous song points to the life Jesus will bring to us.

*Which aspects of this song cause you to bubble over with joy?
Which inspire you to pray for change to be seen this Christmas?
And, which fill you with a quite faith and courage like Mary's
so that you trust in what our Lord is doing and what he will do?*



All glory to the Father, Son,
and Spirit now proclaim;
with Mary let the world rejoice
and praise God's holy name!

*David Mowbray (b. 1938)
based on Luke 1:46-55
CCLI reported*

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, with Mary my soul rejoices at the wonder of your coming to live as her Son and as our Saviour King. You fill me with joy!
Yet, at times, I also need Mary's quiet courage. Strengthen me, I pray...
Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, with Mary my soul rejoices at the perfect nature of your kingship. You were born to turn our world right-side up.
Strengthen, Lord, those who are striving to bring Mary's song to life...
Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, with Mary my soul rejoices at the gift of new life.
Being a parent-to-be can be a joyous time. It also requires a quiet courage like Mary's. Strengthen, Lord, all parents in waiting...
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.**