

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 26 January 2025

Epiphany 3

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. This week, we find Jesus in his home synagogue. Called up to read from Scripture, he chooses a passage from Isaiah that speaks of what he has come to do, which is to surprise everyone by caring for the forgotten or fallen. It is who Jesus is. It is who we are called to be.

Enjoy pondering how you are following his example.

Every blessing,

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As you prepare to ponder our Lord's calling to care for the forgotten and the fallen, offer your praise to the one who sent him.



Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,
sing and praise your God and mine!
Great the Lord in love and wisdom,
might and majesty divine!
He who framed the starry heavens
knows and names them as they shine.
Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,
sing and praise your God and mine!

Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926-2024)

CCLI reported

Prayers and Reflections
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God's love and care

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.

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Enfold me with your love,
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, when you are ready, reflect on our Lord's love and care.

Praise the Lord, his people, praise him!
Wounded souls his comfort know.
Those who fear him find his mercies,
peace for pain and joy for woe;
humble hearts are high exalted,
human pride and power laid low.
Praise the Lord, his people, praise him!
Wounded souls his comfort know.

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

Our second verse speaks of the love and compassion our Lord came to bring to those in need of lifting up: the wounded souls. The love he brings is his Father's love for his broken and hurting children, and the forgiveness he brings is his Father's too. If we want to know what our Father is like, we simply have to look to Jesus. Feel his love in this short passage from the Gospel of Luke.

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.' Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

Luke 13:10-13

Our Lord notices when we are struggling. Take a moment to ponder this. What has he noticed about you this week? Offer our Lord your prayers and praise.

As Jesus came to be so are we called to be, I wonder who is he inviting you to notice. What might you do for them this week?

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 God on high.

God of all mercy,
your Son proclaimed good news to the poor,
release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed:
anoint us with your Holy Spirit
and set all your people free
to praise you in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer is a perfect link into our Gospel reading and the passage Jesus chose from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. It hints at how we can live as Jesus lived, with compassion for all who are laid low in life. It is through God's Spirit within us. We cannot do this on our own. We need his help to see everyone as our Lord and his Father sees them.

Our prayer invites two questions.

- ☆ Whose suffering is on your heart?
Your family and friends? Your neighbours and carers?
Strangers whose struggles are in the news?
Who will you pray for this week?
Or, bless with an act or two of kindness?
- ☆ Who do you look down on? Struggle to love
or show compassion for their situation?
Why is this? How might God's Spirit offer fresh insights
on how love can set them free?

When God made our world and paused to look at all that he had made, God saw that it was very good. Each person, each creature should be free to enjoy the glorious beauty of life on Earth. This is the ultimate aim of our Lord's mission and why we pray this week's collect for freedom, love and compassion.



Praise the Lord for times and seasons,
cloud and sunshine, wind and rain;
spring to melt the snows of winter
till the waters flow again;
grass upon the mountain pastures,
golden valleys thick with grain.
Praise the Lord for times and seasons,
cloud and sunshine, wind and rain.

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LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Jesus sets out his plans

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’

Luke 4:14-21

Guided by God's Spirit...

As I read through this favourite passage of mine (and of Jesus too!), what stood out for me is the presence of the Spirit. Jesus returns to Galilee after spending time alone in the wilderness reflecting on his mission. Well, not completely alone, as I imagine him spending much of his time, his waking hours, in prayerful contemplation with his Father in heaven, guided by his Spirit within. Fired up and ready for what is to come, Jesus returns to the towns and villages around Galilee in the power of the Spirit. Jesus can only do what he has come to do fuelled by God's Spirit within. I wonder if this shone out of him?

This is the first appearance of the Holy Spirit in today's passage. There are two more appearances, one unseen and one spoken. Unseen is the Spirit's guiding of the synagogue elders who invited Jesus to come up to the front to read that Sabbath and their choice of Scripture, namely the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Spoken is the reference in this passage to the Spirit's anointing of Jesus to be good news to the outcast and sinners, who have been marginalized by those sitting in this very synagogue. It feels like a direct reference to Jesus' baptism. Jesus was baptized for this very purpose. This is who he is and what he has come to do.

If this is what he has come to do, and his work is ongoing, it means that this is our calling too as his Church and his followers. For as St. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, we are the body of Christ and each one of us has a part to play. We too were anointed with the Holy Spirit at our baptism so that we could reflect the love and the compassion that is within us, our Lord's love and compassion.

Take a moment to ponder how your life has been shaped by our Lord's loving example. His heart was for the outcasts (e.g. those with leprosy), the sinners (e.g. tax collectors like Matthew and Zacchaeus), and those who were struggling to cope with ill-health or the loss of loved ones. And, he challenged those who added to their burdens (e.g. the law makers).

Invite God's Spirit to set your heart free to love as fully and as widely as our Lord loves, and to inspire you to act with love in all your encounters.



Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,
peace and plenty crown your days!
Love his laws, declare his judgements,
walk in all his words and ways;
he the Lord and we his children,
praise the Lord, all people, praise!
Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,
peace and plenty crown your days.

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OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, you came to be good news to the forgotten and the fallen, to lift them up by your love and compassion. It is a beautiful message to me when I am feeling down. Your Spirit inspires me to act with love...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you see the suffering in our world today. You witness who is crying out for freedom and justice. Your Spirit hears the cries of the oppressed. Lord, speak to the hearts of those who can set them free...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you saw the pain in the eyes of those living with ill-health, confusion and distress. You touched their hearts with your love, you brought peace into their lives. Lord, comfort and console, I pray...

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.**