

# **Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone**



**Prayers and Reflections  
for use at home**

**Sunday 17 March 2024**

**Lent 5**

Our Lenten pilgrimage is drawing towards a close. Passiontide has begun, the cross is firmly in Jesus' and our sights. Today, we marvel at the courage of Jesus who, on sensing the mounting opposition to his message of Good News, does not turn tail and run. He stands firm - faces up to his deniers - and walks towards his death. He has inspired saints and martyrs over the centuries to do the same.

May our Lord inspire the closing stages of your Lenten walk to the cross.

Every blessing,

**Revd Katrina**

**Vicar**

Phone No. 01604 812907

Mobile No. 07710 464675

E-mail: [katrinahutchins94@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:katrinahutchins94@yahoo.co.uk)

*As you prepare to reflect on our Lord's sacrifice and the little sacrifices you make in your own life, ponder how you feel about the cross.*



It is a thing most wonderful,  
almost too wonderful to be,  
that God's own Son should come from heaven,  
and die to save a child like me.

*William Walsham How (1823-1897)*

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# Prayers and Reflections for use at home Sacrifice!

## PREPARING OURSELVES

*Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love.  
You may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here,  
in this 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.*

Father, as I prepare to spend this time in your presence,  
I place myself into your hands.

Whatever you may do, I thank you:

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let your will be done in me,  
and through me.

**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. You may wish to recall your reflections  
on finding a quiet place to be with God from Watch + Pray before asking  
for God's forgiveness. When you are ready, offer this second verse.*

And yet I know that it is true:  
he chose a poor and humble lot,  
and wept and toiled, and mourned and died,  
for love of those who loved him not.

*William Walsham How (1823-1897)*



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

*Feel our Lord's love and compassion, and receive of  
his forgiveness.*

*You and I, we love our Lord and ever hold his sacrificial death on the cross on our hearts. We wonder at how God's Son could go through all of this pain and shame out of love for us. It is a thing most wonderful to be. Yet, it is also so shocking to be. Couldn't God find a gentler way to save us, and all humanity, from ourselves and draw us into the circle of his love? Well, human history shows us that it is so very hard for us to live at one with those around us. Our bibles tell us how very hard God tried to keep his chosen people on track, and, time and time again, they failed to live by his two key principles - Love God with every fibre of your being, love others as yourself.*

*And so, God's own Son did choose a poor and humble lot to show us - once and for all - that God loves us. And, if God loves us this much, then we should love him too. We should yearn to spend time in stillness, silently tuning our hearts and our thoughts in time with his.*

*How have you done this in recent days? Did you struggle at times to keep the whole of your attention on the one who is pure love? If you did, wonder why this was so. What can you learn from this? Do differently in the closing stages of your walk to the cross?*

*Offer your reflections up to the Lord and ask for his Spirit's guidance, serenity and peace to rest daily with him. Offer him your love.*



I cannot tell how he could love  
a child so weak and full of sin;  
his love must be most wonderful,  
if he could die my love to win.

*William Walsham How (1823-1897)*

*May you feel your burdens lifting as you place them on our Lord's shoulders. Abide in his gift of inner peace. It is his gift to us.*



## 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 cycle of prayer to our God who always listens to our prayers.*

Gracious Father,  
you gave up your Son  
out of love for the world:  
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,  
that we may know eternal peace  
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Our prayer for this opening week of Passiontide reminds us that the cross, and Christ's death, is the greatest of mysteries. How can it be that God's own Son - his Messiah - should die to save us? Should he be rejected as king so that he could be crowned Christ our King? How could people so like us, ordinary people who had welcomed Jesus into their hearts and homes, allow him to be taken? Why the cross? Why is it needed for our healing, forgiveness and reconciliation?*

*Which of these questions speaks to your heart? What is God inviting you to contemplate as you look to the cross? And, in pondering this, how will God guide you to a place of deeper and abiding peace?*

*We can never perfectly understand the cross. We can never fully know our Lord who died there for us. We can simply peel back a layer at a time and edge ever closer to the heart of the one who loves us.*



I sometimes think about the cross,  
and shut my eyes, and try to see  
the cruel nails and crown of thorns,  
and Jesus crucified for me.

*William Walsham How (1823-1897)*

# LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

## Jesus predicts his death

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

*John 12:20-33*

## Sacrifice!

*Our Gospel reading gives us a glimpse of Jesus' final days. Having been welcomed into Jerusalem to great acclaim as the long promised king, Jesus is quietly going about his God-given business - teaching, preaching, sharing the good news of God's love. Beneath the surface, tensions are slowly rising as the Pharisees and Jewish elders work to find a solution to their problem. What to do about this man Jesus?*

*It is clear that Jesus knows this.*



*He likens what is to happen to a seed or a grain. If you leave a seed in its packet, safe and sound, nothing happens. At best, you have a single grain which can be eaten. And then, once eaten, it is gone. If you leave the seed or grain too long, even if you plant it in good soil, nothing happens. It fails to germinate. But - if you sacrifice your seed or grain by planting it, you continue and extend the cycle of life.*

*It is one of the ways that Jesus wants us to contemplate the cross. It is God's gift of life. A radical gift! For it is God's own Son - our perfect, second Adam (whose name means "soil" or "earth") - who gives his life so that we might have life. Life in all its fruitful fullness. A life lived on Earth in perfect union with his Father in heaven; a life which bears the fruits of his Spirit of love, joy and peace. Like a seed, Jesus sacrifices his life to set our love free to blossom and flourish. This is the glory of the cross.*



*It is most wonderful to know  
his love for me so free and sure;  
but 'tis more wonderful to see  
my love for him so faint and poor.*

*William Walsham How (1823-1897)*

*What is your response to Christ's sacrifice of his life? To his gift of life in all its fullness and fruitfulness? Passiontide inspires each one of us to contemplate how Christ's sacrifice shapes our own life. Daily, Christ calls you and I to give of ourselves so that others may experience his precious gifts of love, joy and peace. I wonder... What little sacrifices do you make in his name? How do you give of yourself so that others can experience more of God's love?*



*And yet I want to love thee, Lord;  
O light the flame within my heart,  
and I will love thee more and more,  
until I see thee as thou art.*

*William Walsham How (1823-1897)*

## OUR PRAYERS

*Here are some Passiontide prayers. Feel free to add your own.*

Lord Jesus, you sacrificed your life on the cross so that all may have life, life in all its fullness. Lord, thank you for the times when I feel this life, experience the joy of your love and peace. Help me to hear your voice.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you gave up your life of love to set us free to love as you love without limits. Yet - still, across the globe, we place limits on our love, and war divides nations. Lord, pour out your reconciling love, I pray, on...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, as you looked towards the cross, your Father spoke words of affirming love. You faced this for him. Lord, help me to face my own cross of suffering. And, Lord, comfort those who fear the future, 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.**