

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 23 February 2025
2nd Sunday before Lent**

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. As we get closer to the start of Lent, we explore the story of a storm at sea. What Jesus says, and does, reminds us of the opening verses of Genesis. God spoke, creation obeyed. What does it mean that Jesus can do the same? This is the question facing the disciples.

Enjoy pondering who Jesus is!

Every blessing,

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*As you prepare to enter into this week's Gospel reading,
take a moment to wonder at who Jesus is to you and to God's creation.*



Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does his successive journeys run;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Prayers and Reflections
for the 2nd Sunday before Lent
Kingship and Kinship

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, reflect on the words of this second verse.

People and realms of every tongue,
dwell on his love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)



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

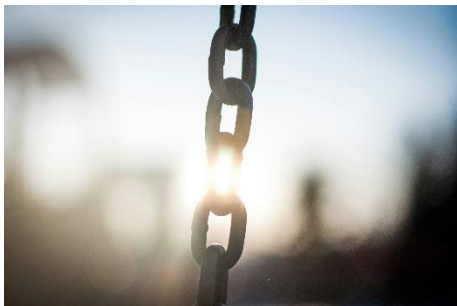
Feel God's forgiveness.

Our second verse opens up the question that we are exploring in this pre-Lent edition of prayers and reflections. Who is Jesus? What is the scope of his Kingship? Our verse is saying that he is King of all peoples across the globe. All can accept him as their King. His is a realm which dissolves rather than puts up barriers. Which is, I think, a very powerful message for our current times. Do ponder this.



Also, as our attentions turn towards Lent, Holy Week, and the cross, we are invited to picture Palm Sunday, with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Rejected by the elders and authorities, our Lord will be crowned on a cross not a throne. He will take the burden of the world's sins onto his pain-wracked shoulders.

The forgiveness of the cross is for everyone on earth - all peoples, places and nations if they accept him as their King. He came to set creation free to love as God loves - without limits. Do contemplate this as you say or sing the third verse of our hymn. It is a verse that speaks of Jesus' mission (Luke 4:14-21), which we explored on Epiphany 3.



Blessings abound where'er he reigns:
the prisoners leap to lose their chains;
the weary find eternal rest,
and all the humble poor are blest.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

*Today, this prayer is being said across the benefice and the globe.
Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our God of life and love.*

Almighty God,
give us reverence for all creation
and respect for every person,
that we may mirror your likeness
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer flows beautifully on from our previous reflection. It begins by giving God the glory for who he is - Almighty; a word that evokes who God is. Pause for a moment to ponder what this title means, and then read on.

'Almighty' speaks to us of God being all powerful, all encompassing as God's dominion is the whole of the universe, all that is and will be, because creation continues to grow and evolve. His power is complete, yet he meets us with love and tenderness, and through the vulnerability of his Son (think of the stable and of the cross). He came to do this out of love for the human race and, I think, out of concern for the wellbeing of his creation.

Our prayer speaks to us of what Jesus came to do and how his kingship transforms our view of our role. We are called to respect and revere as Jesus would do in our shoes. Think back to his mission and what he did as he walked the earth, travelling from village to village. It is the lowest of society's low and the weakest of community's weak that he notices, blessing them with his love and care and good news.

Contemplate how you mirror the likeness of Jesus. Do you place limits on your love? Who is he inviting you to respect more than you do? Look at the signs of God's creative powers that you can see from your room. Ponder your love for all that he has made. Give thanks for the gift of life. What might you do to bless his creation this week?



To him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head;
his name like incense shall arise
with every morning sacrifice.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Jesus calms the storm

One day Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!'

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 'Where is your faith?' he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement, they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.'

Luke 8:22-25

His Kingship, His Kinship...



Imagine being out on an inland sea as, suddenly, a storm bursts in. Imagine if this was in an open boat without modern aids like lifejackets. Terrifying is one of the words that I would use to describe the situation facing the disciples.

Imagine how it would feel to speak knowing that the winds will die down. Having perfect and powerful control over the forces of nature is, still, something beyond us as a human race. What Jesus does in this storm is a very direct reference back to the opening chapter of Genesis.

When God speaks order is created out of chaos and seas learn their limits.

And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let the dry ground appear.' And it was so.

God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'.

And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:9-10

Jesus speaks and nature obeys. The power and authority that he displays suggests his kinship. Until now, only God in heaven could do this. On Lake Galilee, Jesus shows that - like his Father - he can do this. It is no wonder that the disciples had a lot to ponder as they made their way safely to shore. 'Almighty' is likely to be a word that they're trying not to use to describe who Jesus is even though it perfectly describes his command of the winds and the waves.

Early as this is in the Gospel of Luke, this simple account of a storm at sea points to the kingship of Jesus. After the cross and the empty tomb, Jesus will return to his Father's throne. He will become Christ our King, whose reign embraces all of creation.

It is a powerful image to hold in our hearts as we prepare for the rigours, the self-discipline, of our Lenten pilgrimage. Why we seek to deny ourselves and deepen our prayer lives is to serve our Lord and King better than we do already, and to bless his earthly kingdom. He is so worthy of our praise.

Ponder this as you read this verse from a vision of heaven. Who is Jesus to you? How is he King of your life?

*'You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.'*

Revelation 4:11

One day, we will see the whole of creation honouring the one who spoke our universe, our world and all life into being.



Let every creature rise and bring
peculiar honours to our King;
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, you were in the boat with your disciples,
just as you are with me in all of life's sunshine and storms.
You stay calm when I am afraid. Lord, teach me to trust you fully.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you woke at your disciples' fearful cries, and spoke to calm
the winds and waves. Nature obeyed your voice. You see our world's
fears. You hear the cries of the vulnerable. Speak, Lord...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you saw the fear in your disciples' faces,
and heard it in their voices. They were afraid for their lives.
You see the pain of those on my heart. You love them. Speak, Lord...

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.**