

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 26 July 2026
Trinity 8**

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. This week, Jesus offers five short parables to get us thinking about what God's kingdom is like. Each story looks simple. Don't be deceived! Each one is rich with hidden depth and inspiring insights.

May our Lord's words excite and encourage you.

Every blessing,

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*As you prepare to reflect on your heart's treasure,
your faith, open yourself to our Lord's presence.*

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Irish 8th century

trans. by Mary Elizabeth Byrne

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Trinity 8
Seek

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 next verse.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Irish 8th century
trans. by Mary Elizabeth Byrne
versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull



*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 verse is a verse of longing and of promise.

We long to have a close and deep relationship with the one who is Father, Son and Spirit to us. Yet, at times, we allow life to get in the way of this beautiful closeness. Our busyness distracts us. Our self-reliance diverts us away from him. Our unresolvable problems prevent us from trusting in our Lord's teaching on the power of praying, 'So I say to you: ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.'

Our verse re-centres us on our God who is for us, alongside us and within each one of us. It is a prayer to draw close by listening intently to God's words to us – our bibles. It is a prayer to abide in his presence around us, within us, and sense his still small voice.

God promises that he will show up when we turn to him. He shows up more than we do! Our verse is our promise to him. In this time of praying and reflecting, we will be fully present to him. This week, we will try to keep on asking – seeking – knocking so that we experience the gift of his at-one-ness with us. He will dwell in us as we rest in him.

Give thanks for his divine protection.



*Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward,
great Power of my power.*

Irish 8th century

trans. by Mary Elizabeth Byrne

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PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

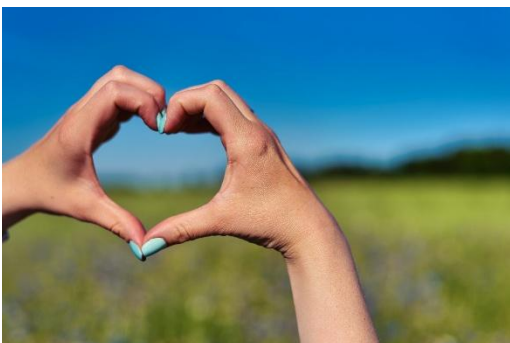
(The Collect)

Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our God whose love is unbreakable.

Lord God,
your Son left the riches of heaven
and became poor for our sake:
when we prosper save us from pride,
when we are needy save us from despair,
that we may trust in you alone;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer invites us to contemplate who or what we are nurturing within our hearts. It is a life-shaping question. Our prayer begins by inviting us to think about how much Jesus loves us. Answer is beyond measure as Jesus gave up his place at his Father's side. He came to earth as a baby, a vulnerable baby born to a young first-time mum. He put his life at risk to save our lives. He drew close to those who were looked down on by religious leaders and by their neighbours. He showed us how to live with love – selfless love – in our hearts. Contemplate the depth and breadth of our Lord's self-giving and sacrificial love.

Our prayer concludes by asking for God's help to place our trust in him in every season of our lives and live as Jesus teaches us to do. Seek what you need of him to do this.



Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Irish 8th century

trans. by Mary Elizabeth Byrne

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The kingdom of heaven is like...

Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.'

He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about thirty kilograms of flour until it worked all through the dough.'

Jesus then told them some more parables, 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.'

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.'

'Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

'Have you understood all these things?' Jesus asked.

'Yes,' they replied.

He said to them, 'Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.'

Seek...

After telling these deceptively short parables, Jesus asks, 'Have you understood all these things?' and his disciples reply, 'Yes.' Really? The disciples had to have the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Weeds explained to them. Our five parables are shorter than these. Even so, each story has hidden depth. Like a woodland path, the further we go into these stories, we realise that there is still more to them.

Jesus is inviting the disciples, and us, to ponder what is at the heart of us, what it means to be one of his whole-life followers. Each of his stories contains layer upon layer. By going deeper into each parable, we kindle our hearts and we shape and inspire our daily living.

Take for example the Parable of the Precious Pearl. The merchant in the story is a buyer and seller of fine pearls. He is a seeker of pearls. Each pearl is bought for as cheap a price as possible. Each pearl is sold for as high a price as possible. Pearls are his source of wealth and quality of life. He is a seeker of wealth for himself and for his family. Something changes when he finds a unique and precious pearl. Would it be too much to call it the greatest pearl in all the world? Perhaps not, when we think of this pearl as being like the kingdom of heaven.

The merchant sells everything to get his hands on this pearl. Everything! So, the only thing that he owns now is this priceless pearl. It means more to him than its financial value. He will never part with this pearl, which means that he and his family are left penniless. They have nothing to live on but, in his heart, he feels rich beyond measure. Contemplate how much your faith – God's love – means to you. Give thanks.



High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish 8th century

trans. by Mary Elizabeth Byrne

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OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, your words are spirit and life to me, precious and inspiring.
I would not trade your love for anything, anything that I have or
anything the world offers. Lord, keep me seeking...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, your love is more precious than all the world's pearls.
Your love makes the poor rich. Your grace makes the weak strong.
You upend the world's values. Lord, help the rich and strong to see this...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, your kingdom offers shelter from life's storms: our sickness,
our sorrow and our suffering. You can turn our despair into hope,
our burdens into freedom. Lord, breathe your peace into the hearts...

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.**