

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 14 August 2022

Trinity 9

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. This week's gospel passage does not pull any punches. We see a different side of Jesus, who is so often portrayed as gentle and patient. Jesus actually describes himself as being under "stress", which may be quite surprising to us. There are very good reasons for Jesus' challenging words. He wants people to understand the reality of what it may cost them to follow him. However tough his words may seem to us, we know that he loves us deeply. He loves us enough to offer his life on the cross to save us. Beneath Jesus' challenging words, his warning is born out of love. A love that offers us all hope.

In the week ahead, if you are feeling stressed or worried, may you be soothed by the knowledge of the love of Jesus Christ for you.

With prayers,

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Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper rev'rence praise,
in deeper rev'rence praise.

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807 – 1892)

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Living by God's words

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 cross in your palm, or on the table, and a bowl of water ready for the time of confession.

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 opening words of this hymn.

Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

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

Based on Psalm 34



As you offer your regrets to God, feel his love and forgiveness. Set free by his gracious love, go and live life inspired by love. May all that you say and all that you do speak of your love for God and for everyone.

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 loving Father.

Almighty God,
who sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church:
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our prayer calls for God to fill our hearts with grace. Grace can act like balm, when brought to bear in a difficult situation. God's grace is a great gift to us. Grace enables us to cultivate the fruits of the spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This in turn helps us to flourish as individuals and enables us to live with each other harmoniously.



Immortal, invisible,
God only wise,
in light inaccessible
hid from our eyes
most blessed, most glorious,
the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious,
thy great name we praise.

Walter Chalmers Smith (1824 – 1908)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Jesus' challenging words

'I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided:

father against son

and son against father,

mother against daughter

and daughter against mother,

mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law

and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

He also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "It is going to rain"; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat"; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

Luke 12:49-56

Setting the scene

Jesus had been involved in some very intense teaching in the time leading up to this gospel passage. This had included encouraging people to stop worrying about what they would eat or what they would wear. Jesus recommended that people should instead learn to trust in God's provision. If they did that, they could focus on striving for God's kingdom on earth.

Jesus then warned his listeners to be ready for the coming of the kingdom. He used a parable about slaves waiting for their master to return. This was to make his point about the sudden return of the Son of Man. The people had to be dressed for action and have their lamps lit. In short, they

needed to prove that they were living by God's words. Furthermore, they needed to show that they were faithful to God. It was no good if they hastily tried to change their behaviour at the last moment, because Jesus would return at an unexpected hour – there would be no warning.

Jesus' words increase in intensity as our gospel passage opens. Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem was drawing closer. He felt under greater pressure to convey his warnings to the people. He needed to stir them up from their complacency. Jesus is exasperated that the people are able to read signs of the weather and can tell whether it is going to rain or it is going to be hot. However, they are unable to read the troubling signs of the times in which they are living. Jesus is astonished that they cannot see the issues caused by the Roman occupation and Herod's oppressive regime. The people cannot grasp the problems caused by arrogant and wealthy high priests and the dubious agendas of the Pharisees. In the midst of this a young prophet, Jesus, is healing the sick and announcing God's kingdom. The people have failed to recognise that this is the moment that Israel has been waiting for – the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus warns people that once his message filters into their households, it will divide families and cause friction. His words echo those of the prophet Micah, who warned about families being divided. However, Micah offered the comforting words: "But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Saviour; my God will hear me." Beneath Jesus' challenging words is his desire to offer people a chance for redemption and salvation. An opportunity for hope.



All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone,
calls my heart to be his own.

Robert Bridges (1844 – 1930)

alt. based on the German of Joachim Neander (1650 – 1680)

Our call to follow his example

We have chosen to follow Jesus. Sometimes our family and friends may find this difficult to understand. It may be tempting to underplay our faith, in order not to risk annoying others and in order to keep the peace. However, that is the kind of peace that brushes things to one side. It isn't really peace at all. It isn't the kind of peace that Jesus offers. His peace is transformational. It strives to right the wrongs of the world and restore justice. It is the peace that promotes love of God and neighbour; forgiveness and reconciliation; honesty and humility. If we have moments when being candid about our faith to others is challenging, let us pray for guidance. Let us be brave about living by God's words. Let us trust God to ease any discord that may arise with family and friends, when we seek to spread the good news and they may be sceptical, resentful or unreceptive. May God lift the darkness and help to create the right conditions in which new faith can flourish, in order to help to build the kingdom here on earth. Take a moment to think about the challenges you face in living by faith, and sharing your faith in your daily life. Seek God's encouraging guidance.



Thou, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight:
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel-day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light.

John Marriott (1780 – 1825)

OUR PRAYERS

Here are some prayers for this Sunday. Feel free to add your own.

Loving God, please give me the courage
to be bold when expressing my faith.

Help me to be patient with those who doubt
and to be steadfast in living by your words.

Loving God, hear my prayer.

Loving God, I pray for our troubled world. At this time, I pray for all areas of the world suffering from natural or human-made disasters. I ask for support for those countries whose harvests have failed and help for countries afflicted by wild fires. I pray for peace throughout the world. I also pray for...

Loving God, hear my prayer.

Loving God, you know all who are troubled, lonely or suffering ill health. You have compassion for those who grieve. You understand when we worry about those we love. Please come alongside those in need. In love, I lift up to you...

Loving God, 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 know me, my needs, hopes and worries.
Help me to put my trust in you in the days ahead
and to remember that you are only ever a prayer away.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**