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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Hold a moment of stillness.

[Pause]

Think of a place that you love to be in, a place that brings you peace – perhaps it reminds you of God or reveals something of God's nature to us. It might be by the sea, in your garden, at home a favourite holiday spot, a mountain or a skyscraper. Perhaps for many of us it will be connected to a beautiful landscape or a special view.

Let us just pause for a moment, imagining yourself into that place. What can you see? How do you feel?

Firstly, let us pause and give thanks.

Lord of our special places, we give thanks for these special places and all that they mean to us. We give thanks for the memories this place connects us with, and the special people associated with this place, perhaps faces, names and stories we remember when we come here.

Living God, we give you thanks for your creation and all the joy and wonder it brings us. We pause to give you thanks.

[Quiet]

Secondly, still imagining ourselves in this special place, we pause to say sorry, sorry to you Lord God.

As we look out on our special places, we feel a sense of connection to all the other precious parts of your creation, no matter how popular or appreciated. We say sorry.

We say sorry for the damage we have done to these places, and the ways we have been part of systems that have damaged your world, or the people who live there. We are sorry for the pollution, destruction and pain that we inflict on each other, and on your world.

For the sake of these special places, the people of your world, and all that we love we ask that you would move, inspire and transform us. Accept us as we are, and use us for your work to create a better, safer, fairer world.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

255 STF – The Kingdom of God is justice and joy - [YouTube](#)

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or tradition with which you are most familiar.

¹ Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

Readings: Colossians 2:6-15 – [Click for reading](#)
Luke 11:1-13 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the readings

Take a few more steps backwards and think about the scenario Luke describes. The chapter begins by telling us that ‘Jesus was praying in a certain place...’. Jesus is quite often found praying in Luke, so we imagine that the disciples were familiar with seeing him at prayer – and perhaps had noticed too how Jesus drew strength and peace from this, perhaps he was energised by his times of prayer, or given a renewed sense of purpose. Whatever it was that the disciples saw in Jesus and his prayer life, they wanted it too. ‘Lord, teach us to pray’. He responds with a simple outline prayer with about five ideas. Let’s take a quick look at the prayer:

It’s a prayer which begins by recognising the mystery and holiness of **God**, revealed as Father, then expresses a longing for the **Kingdom**, the rule of God to come. It’s a prayer which refers to that daily gift of manna in the wilderness, in a request for **daily bread**, then moves straight into a challenging 2-sided approach to **forgiveness** – forgive us as we forgive others and it finishes with a supplication not to be led into situations which might overpower us, an appeal to God’s **grace**... God – Kingdom – Provision – Forgiveness – Grace.

That’s what’s included – but almost as interesting is what is missing; when we think about the breadth of Christian theology and spirituality, so much is not mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer!

To close, let’s look again at that story of the friend at midnight. We usually understand it to be an exhortation to persist in our prayers, to keep on asking... certainly that meaning is there and is a valuable reminder not to give up. But what if we were to put ourselves in the shoes not of the petitioner, but of the neighbour; the neighbour who is already in bed, who has gone through their nightly rhythm of locking up & putting their family to bed and who is very unwilling to get up and respond. To them, this is a story of the unexpected, of intrusion, of interruption, of surprise. Does that approach also have something to teach us about prayer and the life of discipleship?

The story is literally a ‘wake-up call’. Do we need to wake up to the possibility of God coming to us in interruptions to our normal routines and in the disruption of our usual ways of working? In the past two years of pandemic and lockdown, we have seen people respond in extraordinary ways to unprecedented times and circumstances, in our homes, in society and in the church. In a myriad of ways people have shown kindness, compassion and creativity and have worked to provide a better environment, a kinder society, a fairer world.

The final words of Jesus in this passage again call upon an everyday occurrence; if a child asks a parent for a fish or an egg, they don’t expect to be given a snake or a scorpion instead. The implication is that if even foolish and sinful human parents know how to respond to their children, how much more will God give good things when asked – and in particular, the Holy Spirit. It seems that all of our praying might be summed up in a very simple request that God would give us the very best gift of

all – God’s own self, in the daily gift of the Holy Spirit. When did I, when did you, last ask God for that gift?²

Hymn

503 STF – Love divine - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Until that moment which Wesley describes as ‘casting our crowns before him, lost in wonder love and praise’, until heaven finally calls us home, we have a job to do, a role to play in bringing love and hope into a broken world. Let us go out and do that job this week.

Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 25th July

- Take 12 minutes today to watch this video message from Shane Claibourne, American thinker and community leader. Pray about how it makes you feel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHhfoL-ZHT0>

Tuesday 26th July

- By some mystery, the Spirit of God is here,
By the grace of God, I am loved and accepted here,
In some unknown, unknowable way,
I am connected with people all around the world who are praying right now.
Open my heart to your Spirit Lord, today.
Amen.

² Reflection written by Jill Baker

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Wednesday 27th July

- Note: Trigger warning (suicide)
- On this day in 1890, Vincent Van Gogh shot himself, and died of the wounds two days later.
- On this day, we pray for all who are affected by suicide. For families, for those who are grieving, for people considering ending their own lives.
- Come, God of grace. Come Lord of light. Come, prince of peace.
Amen.

- For help and support, whatever you're going through, The Samaritans will face it with you. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116123 (UK), email jo@samaritans.org or visit <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Thursday 28th July

- Creator God, great shepherd of the sheep, fill me with your hope as I pray. Holy Spirit, give me the strength and courage for this day, fill me with the peace I need, and the joy of being surrounded by your love. Help me to notice where your love is at work in the world, and to get involved where I can. Lord of love, show me what is mine to do today.
Amen.

Friday 29th July

- As the working week ends, take a moment today to offer thanks to God for some sort of blessing you have received, something that you can give thanks for, as a gift.
- You might like to start a gratitude diary, or to write down the things you are grateful for every day. Take time to read them aloud, and to say thank you.

Saturday 30th July

- Today is International Day of Friendship.
- Why not call or text a friend to tell them you are praying for them, and to find out if there is anything in particular you can pray for, or if they would like you to pray with them.