

## MARCH 18TH 2021 THURSDAY PRAYER - OUR THEME IS BLESSINGS

Reading: Matthew ch5 v 1-12

Welcome to you all I hope and pray this morning that you will all be blessed by this time together wherever you may be, at home, on Zoom, phone or You Tube. May the words spoken and prayers prayed, uplift, encourage and support you in the days ahead. May the pictures evoke a different time and place and bring Gods word alive here with us today.

Let us pray: Be Still and know that I am God....

May the calming peace of Jesus gently wash your fears away. May the power of God's Spirit fill your life with Love. And God's healing grace pour over you, with blessings from above.

Reading.... Jesus gives His Sermon on the Mount....Beatitudes



Thursday Prayer we say together...

**Heavenly Father, you called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians United in prayer. Take our prayers we humble ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN**

Mothers' Union Prayer we say together...

**Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world. Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life. Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus' name AMEN.**

We pray especially for Cynthia Yin Yin Maw in Myanmar in this time of deep division in her country. She is a Provincial Community Development Coordinator, running courses for Mothers' Union reaching out to those in so much need. She says "We come together to show that religion is not about conflict but about peace." We pray for a new understandings, for voices to be heard and violence to stop.

We say together: **Lord hold them all in the palm of your hand.**

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS ✚ ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL • BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS ✚ ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL •

This is from Ground Zero in New York

We pray for Our Worldwide Links: Lusaka in Zambia, Shoyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnager in India and our Diocese to Diocese with Kigali and Vellore. We say together: Lord hold them all in the palm of your hand.

We pray for all those MU members working Worldwide in projects to better their communities, for Sheran Harper our Worldwide President, for Bev Jullian our CEO, for Kathryn Anderson our Provincial President, all at Mary Sumner House keeping everything afloat.

We say together: **Lord hold them in the palm of your hand.**

From our Wave of Prayer we pray for Kajo-Keji in South Sudan, Tarime in Tanzania, Dutse & Akoko-Endo in Nigeria and Canterbury in England.

We say together: **Lord hold them all in the palm of your hand.**

We pray for Hazel our President, for all Trustees, for Task Group Leaders in, Faith in Action, Praying Our Faith, Finance & Administration and Communications and for all members in our Diocese supporting each other at this time.

We say together: **Lord hold us all in the palm of your hand.**

Blessings in Abundance my own experience.....

With Love from Soham MU's WhatsApp Group

Whichever way we turn, O God there is your face in the light of the moon and the patterns of the stars, in sacred mountain rifts and ancient groves, in mighty seas and creatures of the deep. Whichever way we turn there is your face in the light of eyes we love, in the tears we have tasted, in weathered countenances, East and west, in the soft skin glow of a child everywhere. Whichever way we turn, O God there is your face, there is your face among us.....by John Philip Newell

In a time of quiet let's bring to God our own personal prayers.

We say together: **Lord we come in thanks knowing that you hold our loved ones, our concerns, our joys, our fears, our hurts and our future in the palm of your hand. AMEN**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.

We say together: **Lord give us wisdom, knowledge and understanding to hear your voice and walk in your goodness and blessings all the days of our life. AMEN**

Since starting my Daily Blessing Jar last year I've become more and more aware that blessings come in all shapes and sizes and at times you least expect it. Deciding how to prepare for Thursday Prayer has been a case in point. I started with the reading, one of my favourites since I've visited the Holy Land and looked out from behind the Church of the Beatitudes (built in 1937) where the Sea of Galilee gently laps the shoreline at the foot of sloping hills, where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. It's awesome to think you are standing in a place where Jesus stood, it makes the reading come alive before your very eyes. So it took me right back to the Holy Land to the sights, sounds, smell's, food, people and clashes of cultures.



The Church of the Beatitudes

The reading seems so poignant for the times we're in right now, for the emotions of loss, the care shown to others, the tiredness, the concern and continued support through food banks for vulnerable families, the people protesting none violently against man's inhumanity to man and the glimmers of hope with the delivery of vaccines. That message and promise Jesus gave to His followers on the Mount still holds true today, that He would be with us in whatever circumstance. The Bible I read the passage from was my Grandmothers, its inscribed Agnes Manning 1917 with a verse' Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. What beautiful words. On flipping through the pages I came across a typical Sunday School Card of a nativity scene and on the back it said 'Love and all good wishes from Lizzie' Sadly I never knew my Grandmother but I do know lots about her, I did however know Aunt Lizzie. Further on I found a piece of writing from my Dad, his thoughts on Psalm 104 tucked in the appropriate page. It's well worth a read, again one of my favourites. There was a card

my mum and dad had sent my other Grandmother who I had known really well and was a huge part of my life, when they were on holiday in Scotland. Lastly two small cards one that said flowers from the Holy Land just a few pressed flower petals were left the rest long gone, but there was a beautifully preserved pressed pansy too. Both my Grandmothers loved flowers and my dad was a gardener, his first job was at Queens College Cambridge where he'd planted trees along the riverbank. The smallest card almost more of a stamp, was of a bird on a branch its colour still vibrant 'He hath made everything beautiful' Eccl 3, 11. How true that is and through picking up my Grandmothers Bible with its gold edged pages all still in pristine condition, but clearly used by her, and my mum and dad, I've taken a walk down memory lane holding onto the golden thread through the tapestry of their life and mine that has been so fashioned by the love they had for Jesus and the love of family. I could say why didn't I use my own tatty Bible with scribblings on dog-eared pages with bits and pieces of paper in it.... all treasures to me but then I would have missed the God moments within my Grandmothers Bible, my blessings through listening to that still small voice.... there is no other way to explain it. It has been a journey of joy and thanks, what blessings each one has left me with. My Bible has my own story within its pages .....blessings for others to experience when the time comes..... Recent blessing via the net...I belong to the fan club of Escape to the Chateau a TV programme that follows a couple restoring a French Chateau. It's a great way to connect with people across the world who have many talents that they share. One lady shared a beautiful painting in folk art style, she'd done, of a make believe village and she told us all about this village and what went on in it, how people cared for each other and the planet. There was great conversations between the group about village life that people remembered it was fascinating. I shared that I loved the picture and told her what our Mothers' Union do in Soham now and how our Church hoped to have an Outdoor Market in the Churchyard in May and we would be having a stall. She messaged me back and said how impressed she was with what went on and said she made prints of her pictures and would like to send some to us to raise funds for our projects. She has sent them and they are wonderful what gift and a God moment blessing. We're going to meet up when we're allowed. This is the picture Shelia shared.

Blessings come from our connectedness with our Creator God through prayer, through each other, nature, life experiences, acknowledging His will for our lives and that still small voice speaking to us in the quietness of our hearts. AMEN





## **PHILIP BAKER'S REFLECTION FOR MARCH**

This is Philip's Reflection for March, which would normally have been included in the monthly Newsletter. It is not part of this month's Thursday Prayers but has been added here, as an extra something to think about.

### **REFLECTION FOR MARCH**

This time of year, during Lent and approaching Easter, is full of suggestions for reflection or thoughtful consideration. So, I am going to offer something slightly different this month, more a "thought for the month", in order to avoid creating a "reflection overload"!

Like many of you I have been following the Mothers' Union Prayer Diary with daily prayers for members around the world. I don't know how you have been doing this, or even if there is a "proper" way of doing it, but I have been reciting to myself the prayers in the last three paragraphs of page 5, turning to the appropriate daily page for the wave of prayer specifics, then finishing with the beautiful Mary Sumner Prayer (which never fails to bring an emotional tear to my eye) on the back cover of the booklet.

Every day since I started, something did not seem right to me about the third prayer on page 5: "We pray for all members. May God be with them in every part of their lives, encouraging them and leading them, sheltering and strengthening them so they may work to your praise and glory". Well, I may be slow and you may all have worked this out, but I suddenly realised the other day what it was that troubled me about it; it is all in the third person and so feels impersonal, not involving us directly in the subject. And yet the membership includes us, every one of us, and we all need to play our part, however small that may be, for the aims we so fervently desire to come to fruition. I expect some of you, like me, will have made a contribution towards the recent appeal to provide help and training for our less fortunate members in countries less advanced than ours. I chose to support the establishment of co-operative banking solutions as I remember being really impressed with the simplicity and high yield of such schemes when Susan first came back from Rwanda and told me about them. In such ways we all play a part in improving (or even saving) lives. So, with humility and respect to the authors of the Prayer diary, I suggest we might amend the wording slightly as follows: "We pray for all members. May God be with us in every part of our lives, encouraging us and leading us, sheltering and strengthening us so we may work to your praise and glory."

To me this is a prayer of wider application than just for our sisters (and brothers) who are struggling to cope. It includes us all and becomes a prayer of hope and supplication which we can use at any time, because it asks God for his help, and God always hears our cry. Try it and see if it works for you, it certainly does for me.

*Philip Baker*