

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



Daily Prayer *for Advent*

Monday 29 November 2021 to Friday 24 December 2021

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.

Luke 1:68-69

Welcome to this special edition of prayers and reflections for daily use during Advent. As we prepare to celebrate with joy the coming of God's Son at Christmas, this year, we are going to take a closer look at the four Christmas songs that we find in the bible: Zechariah's song at the birth of his God-given son John the Baptist, Mary's song, the magnificent Magnificat, the Angels' song as they celebrate Christ's birth at Bethlehem, and Simeon's song on seeing the baby Jesus in the temple, the moving Nunc Dimittis. All of these Spirit-filled songs come from the heart and, even if you have not read them in the bible, you may well have heard them in church.

May these God-breathed songs inspire your own song this Advent to Christmas. May God fill you with his light and his joy, his peace and his hope.

God bless,

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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.**

WEEK ONE

A Song of Salvation

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

I put my trust in your steadfast love;
my heart will rejoice in your salvation. *Psalm 13:5*

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.
You know all that is on my heart,
and the “to do” lists and worries
that are cluttering my life.
Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read this week's song and pause to contemplate on today's reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent Zechariah.

Heavenly Father,
you hold together the past and the future,
and all time is safe in your hands.
Be with me, Lord, as I journey with
Zechariah's song of salvation.
May his hope be my hope too.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Benedictus
A Song of Salvation

*Zechariah sang this prophetic song after the birth of his son. Who will he become?
John the Baptist, the one born to prepare the way for Jesus.*

1. Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.
2. He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.
3. Through his holy prophets God promised of old
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us,
4. To show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.
5. This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies.
6. Free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.
7. And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
8. To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
9. In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
10. To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1:68-79

Monday - Zechariah sings

November 29th

For nine months, Zechariah has been unable to speak because he asked God's angel for a sign when he was told that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a son. Zechariah thought they were too old to become parents. When his son is born and he names him, as instructed, 'John', he regains his voice and sings this glorious song of salvation. He looks forward to God's promises coming true.

Think back to a big change that happened in your life. How did it feel to move from your old life to your new one? Where was God during this time? Looking forward, where might he be?

Tuesday - Preparing for Jesus

November 30th

Zechariah's song is like the overture to Jesus' story. It prepares us for God's Son's arrival at Bethlehem. It looks forward to who he will be. His song is full of echoes from the Old Testament prophets. Here is one of them from Isaiah 9:6.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

As you reflect on this prophecy of Jesus' birth, think about who he is to our world. Who needs to receive his peace this Christmas? Pray for them.

Wednesday - Freedom to sing

December 1st

Zechariah remembers God's repeated promises to save and rescue his people from their enemies. He believes that these promises are coming true. He sings of being free to worship God each and every day of his life. No one can stop him!

Jesus has given us this same freedom. We can speak to his Father at any time.

Nothing and no one can stop us. If we are lost for words, we have the prayer Jesus gave us. If we feel unworthy, God wipes away our fears. Sing his praises!

Thursday - Who will you be?

December 2nd

Zechariah looks at his new born son with wondering love. What is his role to be? He is going to be the one who points God's people to Jesus by calling them back to God's ways and by baptising them as a sign of God's forgiveness.

Think about your own faith journey and your baptism. What do they mean to you? Give thanks to God for his love and forgiveness.

Friday - Dawning of hope

December 3rd

Zechariah's song ends on an uplifting note. He sings of God's compassion. It is like a light shining in the darkness. God's salvation will free us from the fear of death, and fill our lives with peace. Even before Jesus is born, Zechariah can foresee the cross and the empty tomb. It fills him with joyous hope.

What is making you hopeful this Christmas? Offer to God your hopes and dreams.

Saturday - God's salvation

December 4th

Our journey through Zechariah's Song of Salvation is drawing to a close. Now, it is time to sing our own song of praise to God for his salvation.

Can you sum up in one sentence what the birth of Jesus means to you? Which hymn or worship song or carol says what you'd like to sing to God today? Sing to him.

WEEK TWO

A Song of Justice

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. *Psalm 9:1*

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.
You know all that is on my heart,
and the “to do” lists and worries
that are cluttering my life.
Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read this week’s song and pause to contemplate on today’s reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent Mary.

Lord Jesus, you were tiny, but incarnate in Mary’s womb,
when she sang her song of praise.
You were with her in body and in spirit.
Be with me, Lord, as I journey with
Mary’s song of justice. May I play my part in your plan
for making the world as it should be.

Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Magnificat **A Song of Justice**

Mary sung this prophetic song after sharing her good news with her cousin Elizabeth. She too is with child. Her song speaks of his passion for justice.

1. My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;
he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
2. From this day all generations will call me blessed;
the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name.
3. He has mercy on those who fear him.
from generation to generation.
4. He has shown strength with his arm
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
5. Casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.
6. He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
7. He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
to remember his promise of mercy,
8. The promise made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Luke 1:46-55

Monday - Feeling blessed

December 6th

God has chosen Mary for a very special role. She is to be the mother to his Son, caring for him from before his birth to after his death. She is a young and inexperienced girl yet God can see deep into her heart and recognises her faith. She is the one. And, despite the shame of being an unmarried mum-to-be, Mary is bursting with joy. She feels blessed by God.

Read again the opening two verses of Mary's song. Notice how special she feels. God knows you as deeply and clearly as he knew Mary. Feel the blessing of his love. Open your heart to him and give thanks to him.

Tuesday - Upside down!

December 7th

Mary goes on to sing of God's plan for her son. Jesus will turn the world's standards upside down. He will sit and eat with sinners. He will show love, compassion and attention to the hurting ones. He will put in their place those who put rules before people.

Think about recent news items. Which of these relate to social justice? Which one has spoken most deeply to you? Contemplate what God desires and pray for this.

Wednesday - Feeding and filling

December 8th

Mary's song of justice mirrors her Son's own sense of his calling. We see this in sense of being good news to the poor, as in Luke 4:16-21, and in his Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, in Matthew 5:1-12, where he says, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

Think about the hungry who Jesus is filling with good things. It could be those who are being fed by the Daylight Centre. It might be those who feel worthless, unlovable, until they hear that Jesus loves them. Pray for their feeding.

Thursday - Longing for justice

December 9th

Like Mary, we can long for justice. Like Mary, we can trust that God longs to see, and is working towards, an end to injustice and human rights abuse. God wants us to join in with him in seeking to bring about change. Justice will not be complete and perfect until Jesus comes again. Even so, we can still see God's hand at work, and praise him for what he is doing through us and others.

Think about how you have made a difference in your life. How have you stood up for justice and fairness, or fought for change? What might you do this Advent? Pray for those who challenge injustice and champion human rights.

Friday - A promise is a promise

December 10th

When God makes a promise, we know that he will keep it. Mary sings for joy knowing that God's promise made a thousand years and more ago is coming true through her 'Yes!'. All nations will come to know of God's love and salvation thanks to her Son. God's good news is going to be for everyone.

Think about your family and friends and neighbours. Who would you like to receive the good news of God's love this Christmas? Pray for them. Seek God's help in giving them a gift that speaks of Jesus' love.

Saturday - God's justice

December 11th

Our journey through Mary's Song of Justice is drawing to a close. Now, it is time to sing our own song of praise to God for his justice and his fairness.

Can you sum up in one sentence what God desires for our world? Which hymn or worship song or carol speaks to his desire and yours for life on Earth? Sing your chosen song.

WEEK THREE
A Song of Peace

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

May the Lord give strength to his people!

May the Lord bless his people with peace! *Psalm 29:11*

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.
You know all that is on my heart,
and the “to do” lists and worries
that are cluttering my life.
Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read this week’s song and pause to contemplate on today’s reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent the angels.

Heavenly Father,
the angels sang for joy when heaven reached out to earth,
and your love came to us in your Son.
Fill me with the joy of the angels,
this Christmas, as I sense your eternal presence.
May your peace be with me. May I be an instrument of your peace.

Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Gloria A Song of Peace

An angel surprises the shepherds as they watch over their sheep. Heaven and earth unite to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Angels light up the night sky with their singing. Theirs is a song of peace.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

Luke 2:8-14

Monday - A three-part song

December 13th

Our third Christmas song is the shortest. Even so, it has three clear themes: firstly, to God, glory; secondly, to earth, peace; and thirdly, among people, joy and delight, as we realise how much God loves us.

Picture the angels above the hillside, singing. Drink in the beauty of their singing, and the simple beauty of their song. Feel your heart joining in with their heaven comes to earth song. This is the pure joy of Christmas.

Tuesday - Glory to God

December 14th

Many of our favourite Christmas carols feature the angels and their heavenly song. Angels from the realms of glory invites us to give glory to God by worshipping the new-born Jesus, who will be the world's Prince of Peace.

Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story
now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Come and worship

Christ, the new-born King.

Come and worship

Worship Christ, the new-born King.

James Montgomery (1771-1854)

As you sing this carol, give glory to God for his gift of his Son. Heaven came to earth and filled our world with hope.

Wednesday - Peace

December 15th

When the risen Jesus appeared to the eleven, the first thing that he said to them was, 'Peace be with you.' It was such a vital gift that he gave it to them again, saying, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'

Contemplate the peace that God offers. Where do you experience this peace in your life? Where do you need to receive his peace? Pray for this. Feel Jesus saying, 'Peace be with you.' Abide in his peace.

Thursday - Peace 2

December 16th

The angels are God's ambassadors: their message of peace, instead of referring to peace between nations, is offering peace between God and all peoples. Like the ceasefire signed at the end of the 1st World War, God is offering an armistice between heaven and earth. Not that God has been fighting with us. No! It is we humans who have been rebelling - fighting - against God. God sent his son to us to offer a way back into a peaceful relationship. It is a Christmas ceasefire that is not just for Christmas. It is for all time.

Think about where you see the world at odds with God. Pray for his peace to come and reconcile earth with heaven. May we all be at one with him.

Friday - God favours us

December 17th

The third phrase of the Angels' song can be translated as 'goodwill' or 'favour', which suggests that God is concerned for our wellbeing. He wants to bless us, bless everyone, with his love and his kindness. The good news of Christmas is that God's love is for all peoples. No one is outside the circle of his love. His favour is upon everyone. Hence, this phrase is also a message of pure joy and delight.

At Christmas, God is blessing all peoples. Pray for those who are yearning to receive God's blessing in their lives.

Saturday - God's Peace

December 18th

Our journey through the angels' Song of Peace is drawing to a close. Now, it is time to sing our own song of praise to God for his reconciling gift of peace.

Can you sum up in one sentence God's offer of peace? Which hymn or worship song or carol speaks to you of his peace? Sing this for our world.

WEEK FOUR

A Song of Hope

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him. *Psalm 62:5*

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.
You know all that is on my heart,
and the “to do” lists and worries
that are cluttering my life.
Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read this week’s song and pause to contemplate on today’s reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent Simeon.

Lord Jesus, even though you were a baby,
Simeon recognised you as the promised one,
and this filled him with joy and peace,
and with hope for our world.
May his hope be my hope,
as I seek your light.

Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Nunc Dimittis A Song of Hope

Simeon's song comes right at the end of the Christmas and Epiphany seasons. Candlemas is the day when the infant Jesus is brought to the temple by his parents, and Simeon recognises him to be the long-awaited Messiah. God has kept his promise to Simeon. He can die in peace.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

Luke 2:25-35

Monday - Faithful waiting

December 20th

We do not know how long Simeon has been waiting for God to keep his promise, waiting to see God's Messiah. Waiting without knowing when the waiting will be over can be difficult to do. Hope can fade. Yet, Simeon stays strong in his faith, believing that God will keep his promise. His deep joy at what God is going to do has been bubbling away inside him for some time. And then, it bursts into song when he sees the baby Jesus.

Imagine waiting like Simeon for God to keep his promise. Feel yourself waiting with joyful hope at the thought of what God will do. How might Simeon's song help you to wait with eager or hopeful anticipation for God's answer to your own prayers?

Tuesday - Recognition

December 21st

A baby in the temple was not an unusual sight. Parents would have come to give thanks to God for the safe arrival of their child, especially a first-born son. Joseph and Mary were just one of many parents that Simeon would have seen over the years of waiting. How did he recognise Jesus as the one? God's Spirit pointed him out to Simeon.

Think of Simeon going to the temple knowing today is the day. He is going to see God's Messiah. Feel the Spirit stirring in him as he sees Joseph and Mary come in, as he goes to meet them, as he takes their Son into his arms, and looks into the face of Jesus and sees God's salvation. Offer God your awe-filled praise.

Wednesday - Light of the World

December 22nd

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' This light had been burning inside Simeon ever since God promised him that he would see the Messiah before he died. And, he saw this light in the baby Jesus' eyes. As he faced his own death, Simeon's eyes still glowed with the joy-filled light of God's salvation. Emmanuel, God is with us.

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us even as we continue to watch and wait with hope for his return. May the light of hope burn in your heart, today and always.

Thursday - Hope for the future

December 23rd

Simeon's song is a song of hope. Yet, there is a bittersweet element to his song. Jesus is a forty-day-old baby. It will be another thirty years before he leaves home and sets out on his earthly ministry. Simeon will not live to see God's salvation dawning in the lives of God's people. Yet, to know that it is on its way, has begun, this is enough for Simeon to live and die with hope for the future.

Like Simeon, we are living with the 'now but not yet' of God's salvation. Part one, Jesus' life, death and resurrection has happened. We have a sure and certain hope of life beyond death. Part two, Planet Earth being made new with Christ's return, we are waiting to see. It may not be in our lifetime. We have to trust in God's promise and hope for the future. Seek the Spirit's help to live with hope.

Saturday - God's Hope

December 24th

Our journey through Simeon's Song of Hope is drawing to a close. Now, it is time to sing our own song of hope for the future.

Can you sum up in one sentence your hope in God's promise? Which hymn or worship song or carol speaks to you of this hope? Sing this to him.

May you have a happy and blessed Christmas.

Revd Katrina

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12 days of stories and meditations for Christmas'.*