

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 19 November 2023
2nd Sunday before Advent**

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. Another Church year is drawing to a close and we are in Kingdom season. I always think that this season is a perfect way to end our yearly cycle of readings. For we are thinking about Christ as our King and what will happen on his return. He will come as our Judge as well as our King. Today, we are contemplating what account we'll give for the use of the gifts he has given us.

Enjoy pondering how you have used your gifts for the building up of God's kingdom and the blessing of his people.

Every blessing,

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As you get ready to ponder about how you have used your God-given gifts in service of the Lord, I invite you to open up your heart and life to him.



God be in my head,
and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes,
and in my looking;
God be in my mouth,
and in my speaking;
God be in my heart,
and in my thinking;
God be at mine end,
and at my departing.

Book of Hours (1514)

**Prayers and Reflections for use at home
for the 2nd Sunday before Advent
Working for our King**

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, when you are ready, reflect on your life with this opening verse from this week's hymn.

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

*Irish 8th century
trans. Mary Byrne (1880-1931)
Eleanor Hull (1860-1935)*



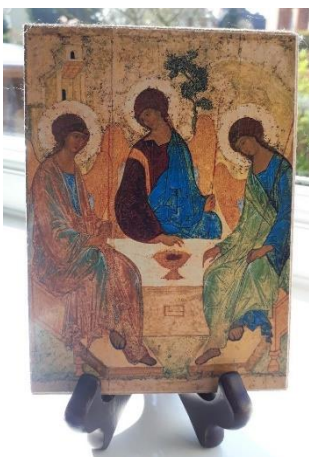
If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.

This opening verse is both a prayer of invitation and a promise. By singing or saying this verse, we promising to God that we will every moment of our lives conscious of his presence and his call to live for him. It is a very high standard to set! You and I will slip from our Lord's side and/or from his ways each and every day. It is so very hard to practise the presence of God in every single moment of our lives and in every contact with others. It is why we have a time of reflection and prayerful penitence at the start of every Sunday service and, also, in our prayers and reflections. We need to re-open ourselves up to the Lord and receive his Father's forgiveness. And, we need to seek his Spirit's strength and inspiration to do better in the coming week. It is why this verse is a prayer too.

Our Lord cannot be our everything in every second of our life without the most precious of gifts that he had given to us: his Holy Spirit.

I invite you to pause to contemplate how you experience the Spirit's presence in the everyday moments of life and in your life's challenges, joys and opportunities. When do you miss feeling him? Lift this up prayerfully to our Lord and ask for his Spirit's renewing.

When you are ready, offer this verse as a prayer and a promise for this coming week. May his Spirit be the mortar that fills in your spiritual gaps.



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

Irish 8th century

trans. Mary Byrne (1880-1931) & Eleanor Hull (1860-1935)

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly circle of prayer to our Faithful One.

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that all creation will one day be healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer flows on beautifully from our opening reflection. It invites God's Spirit to come and stir up those parts of our life and our daily living which lack the full 'oomph' of our faith. It then goes on to look towards Christ's return. How is his return an active part of your faith? How does it inspire how you live your life? Do ponder this.

Pray that, this Kingdom season, God will revive new hope in you as, daily, you look forward to Christ's return. When you see items in the news - such as the latest events in Israel and Gaza - remember that one day our King will return. He will heal all of this division and destruction. He will make new our planet home. I invite you to contemplate this with the help of this glorious vision from the Book of Revelation.

See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

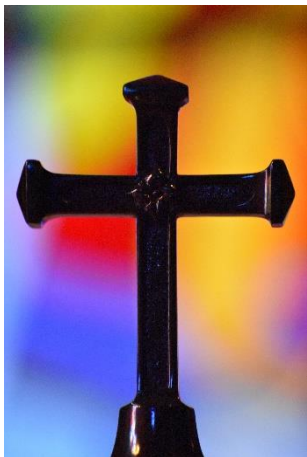
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.

Revelation 21:3-4

On Christ's return, he will judge the actions and inactions of world leaders and all who cause the pain we see on our TV screens. He will recognise and reward those who have given of their lives, their love and their gifts to ease the suffering and to end injustice.

I wonder how he will reward you for the difference you have made, are making, in this life? Contemplate this with the help of this next verse. How has the Lord inspired you to be his champion of love and kindness, fairness and peace?



Be thou my breastplate,
my sword for the fight,
be thou my armour,
and be thou my might,
thou my soul's shelter,
and thou my high tower,
raise thou me heavenward,
O Power of my power.

Irish 8th century

trans. Mary Byrne (1880-1931) & Eleanor Hull (1860-1935)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

The Parable of the Talents

Jesus said, 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have

been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” *Matthew 25:14-30*

Using the gifts God’s given us...

No matter how familiar one of Jesus’ stories is to us we can always find something fresh to reflect on. What struck me this time is that the Lord gives out spiritual gifts according to our abilities. He doesn’t give us anything that we can’t handle. And, what he does give us reflects both who we are and who we are called to be. Sometimes, our calling can seem daunting or scary. It was like this for me when I started to explore the possibility of ordination. If you’ve ever felt like this, don’t worry - it’s natural! What Jesus is inviting you and I to do is to not give up at the very first hurdle and avoid our calling, but to give it a go with the help of his Spirit in us. Earlier, you thought about the difference you have made or are making in the Lord’s service. How does this reflect your gifts?

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, you have given me the precious gift of your Spirit, and the talents which I can use in your service. I am sorry for the times when I avoided your call on my life. Help me to keep on using my gifts.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, we are all given gifts that are in line with our abilities, gifts that we should use to grow your kingdom of love and kindness, fairness and peace. Where much is given, much is expected. I pray for...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, one of the gifts that you give is the talent for noticing when others are in pain and being able to listen and say the right things.

Lord, thank you for all who are a comfort to others. I lift up to you...

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.**