

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 24 October 2021
Last Sunday after Trinity**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Our journey through the Sundays after Trinity is drawing to a close. Next week, the All Saints to the start of Advent season begins. In our final passage from Mark's Gospel, we meet a character who has a walk on part in the story of Jesus' pilgrimage to Jerusalem. His name is Bartimaeus. I would have loved to have met him as he has such a wonderful faith. I wonder if there is someone in the bible - other than Jesus! - who you would have loved to have met. Whose story inspires or fascinates you?

May our risen Lord meet with you in these prayers and reflections. And, may his Spirit inspire and deepen your faith in the one who lived and died and rose again for us.

Every blessing,

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I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's light;
look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him, my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk
till travelling days are done.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

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Believing and Seeing

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 thought or said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening words of our hymn.

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 reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

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



As you think about your times of deep faith and your moments of doubt in the past week, open yourself up to God's loving presence. Share with him your hopes and fears for the coming week. Draw on him for strength and for reassurance. Trust in him.

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER **(The Collect)**

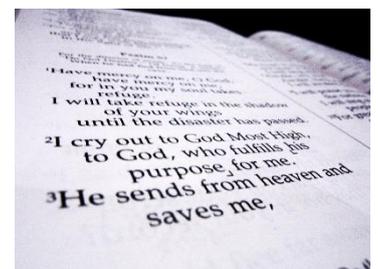
Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our loving Father.

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scripture to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Our prayer for this week invites us to seek God's presence in our bibles, and, by seeking, gain a clearer picture of who Jesus is and why he came to walk the earth and bring God's love and forgiveness close to us. Picture yourself opening your bible, choosing a well-loved passage and feeling God come and speak to you through his timeless words.

Our bibles are a daily source of hope and inspiration, refreshment and strength.

When you are in a dark place, where do you go to in the bible for hope, for reassurance?



On the next page is a psalm that many people turn at a time of crisis, when struggling with life. Listen for God's voice. Sense his presence. Notice how his words speak into your life.

I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.
He will not suffer your foot to stumble;
he who watches over you will not sleep.
Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel
shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself watches over you;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
so that the sun shall not strike you by day,
neither the moon by night.
The Lord shall keep you from all evil;
it is he who shall keep your soul.
The Lord shall keep watch over your going out
and your coming in,
from this time forth for evermore.



Psalm 121

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus

They came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Mark 10:46-end

Setting the scene

Jesus is on the pilgrimage road to Jerusalem. He is nearing his journey's end as Jericho is only fifteen or so miles from the city. It is still quite a trek as the road is dry and dusty, and climbs upwards towards God's holy city. Jesus and his team would not have been on their own as there would have been countless other pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem for the Annual Passover celebrations. I think that the roadside would have been a good place for Bartimaeus to sit and beg for coins. Back in Jesus' time, his blindness could have stopped him earning his own living.

As you look at this image, try to place yourselves in Bartimaeus' shoes. What would it be like to be unseeing? Losing his sight might suggest to him and to others that he has lost God's favour. Would his friends be there for him? Or, would they shun him? Where is God for Bartimaeus?



Believing before seeing

You have heard the phrase 'seeing is believing', well, in Bartimaeus' case, the opposite is true. Unseeing and on the margins of society and scraping a living through begging did not stop Bartimaeus from believing in God, believing in the one from God - Jesus. He could not see Jesus as God's long-promised Messiah, but he could believe in him. We don't know when Bartimaeus lost his sight but we do know that he didn't lose his faith at the same time. He kept on believing. He still had hope.

He is a wonderful role model for us. When life gets tough or we face a health scare or challenge of our own, we should remember Bartimaeus sitting in the dust of the earth - believing. His spiritual sight - the eyes of his heart - did not grow dim.

His unwavering faith reminds me of these lines from Psalm 139.

Even darkness is no darkness with you;
the night is as clear as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.

Psalm 139:11

Contemplate how the light of faith shone in Bartimaeus' heart even though he was living in darkness. God was his light in the darkness. Have you ever experienced this?

And, Bartimaeus did not just have faith. He had persistence too. When the crowds told him to shut up, he continued to call out to Jesus. Unseeing, he still recognised Jesus for who he is. And, Jesus, when Bartimaeus called out to him, unseen, he heard his faith. He invited him to come to him. And then, he asked the same question that he asked James and John last week, 'What do you want me to do for you?'

Jesus did not presume even though he could see into Bartimaeus' heart and see the suffering in his unseeing eyes. He asked him. And, to think, after years of blindness, who does Bartimaeus first see? Jesus. Imagine, opening your eyes and looking into Jesus' eyes. What a precious gift to one who has been so faithful and trusting in adversity.

God is as generous to us as he was to Bartimaeus. He loves us as much as Jesus loved this believing yet unseeing man. Pause to contemplate this, and listen to what God is saying to you through Bartimaeus' story.

I lift up my eyes to the quiet hills to a calm that is mine to share.

Secure and still, I am kept in my Father's care.

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus Christ, you heard Bartimaeus' cries for help even before you could see him. You could see into his heart, and feel the warm glow of his deep faith. When I find life a struggle or face what feels like an unsolvable problem, help me to have faith.

You are my light in the darkness. For this, I thank you.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, across the world, people are losing their sight due to treatable conditions. Bless and guide, Lord, world charities such as Sightsavers who work to restore sight and UK charities like the RNIB and Guide Dogs for the Blind who equip those living with sight loss to experience life in all its fullness. I pray for...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, when you heard Bartimaeus' voice, you were moved to help him. When I turn to you in prayer, for myself and for others, you always listen.

When I cannot find the words to say, you hear me.

Trusting in your tireless love, 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 my 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.**