

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 29 September 2024

Trinity 18

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. Today, we find Jesus issuing some strong warnings to his followers, which can be summed up as 'Don't do anything that will put people off from following me!' It is quite a thought-provoking message.

Enjoy ponder how your life is an invitation to others to follow Jesus.

Every blessing,

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As you prepare to look at how you encourage others to follow Jesus, open your heart and praise him.



Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

*Psalm 34 in 'New Version'
(Tate and Brady, 1696)*

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Trinity 18
Be encouraging!

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, reflect on the words of this second verse.

O magnify the Lord with me,
with me exalt his name;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.

*Psalm 34 in 'New Version'
(Tate and Brady, 1696)*



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

Feel God's forgiveness.

The psalmist is full of trust and faith in God's power to save and his desire to rescue any who call out to him. When our distress is prolonged and it is difficult to see a solution, God may be our first port of call for help. But - does he always answer us so quickly and clearly as this verse suggests? Perhaps, not. It can be that he is - literally - the answer to our prayers. Other times, he is the one who journeys with us as we learn how to live with the pain... the problem... and grow through the experience. We learn to discern his presence and how he is helping us, strengthening us and guiding us. We learn to praise him in our troubles, as well as in our joys.

Pause to ponder your experience of this. If there have been times recently when you have doubted that God is with you in this (whatever this is), offer this to the Lord in prayer and stillness. Seek his response.



When you are ready, contemplate this next verse.

The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just;
deliverance he affords to all
who on his succour trust.

*Psalm 34 in 'New Version'
(Tate and Brady, 1696)*

This idea of placing our trust in God at times of trouble reminds me of this prayer by Charles de Foucauld. It is an invitation to let go and let God be.

Father, I abandon myself into your hands, do with me what you will.

Whatever you may do, I thank you:

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures -

I wish no more than this, O Lord. **Amen.**

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916)

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across the beneficence and the globe.

Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our God of life and love.

God, our judge and saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

There is that word again - trust! This time, we are being called to trust in God's love for us (and for all of his creation). If we can do nothing else, trusting in his love and in the power of his love will give us the faith to believe in his plans for our lives. And, we will have a full and firm hope in his plans for us on our death. Trusting or abiding in God's love is our path to life in all its fullness which our Lord promises to us - his followers.

How have you experienced this fullness of life?

This depth of God's love and strength of his promise?

As you contemplate this, offer your praise and prayers to our Lord as he listens to your words of love. How blessed are you feeling?



O make but trial of his love:
experience will decide
how blest are they, and only they,
who in his truth confide.

*Psalm 34 in 'New Version'
(Tate and Brady, 1696)*

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Hinder no one!

'Teacher,' said John, 'we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.'

'Do not stop him,' Jesus said. 'For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.'

'If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung round their neck and they were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where

“the worms that eat them do not die,
and the fire is not quenched.”

Everyone will be salted with fire.

'Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.'

Mark 9:38-end

Encourage others to follow me...

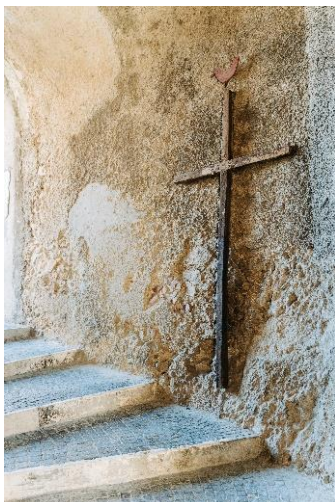
In this three part passage, Jesus is encouraging his to-be church leaders to set his Gospel free to roam across the globe. If someone believes in Jesus enough to do good works in his name, they should welcome them with open arms. If someone comes wanting to find out more about Jesus, they should not place any hurdles in their way.

This passage reminds me of the early days of the Church, when the twelve were faced with this dilemma - What rules should the new non-Jewish members be expected to obey? Some were saying that they should be required to adopt the full requirements of the Jewish Law, including circumcision. Others did not want to place unnecessary obstacles to their faith. I wonder, did the apostles at this gathering recall these words of Jesus? I do hope so.

But - what about us? How does this passage apply to us today as a Church and as our Lord's followers?

It feels like we are in a similar situation to the disciples who met at the Council of Jerusalem to decide how to admit non-Jewish members. There are so many in our villages who have not grown up in the Christian faith, who have never gone to Church. What we do on a Sunday morning - Holy Communion - is so very strange to them. It takes a lot of courage to come in through our church doors for the first time, and to come again and again. Our Lord is challenging us to make our Sunday services open, welcoming and accessible to all who come in search of him. It's a question for us to contemplate prayerfully.

As our Lord's followers, all that we do and say and be in our daily lives should be a reflection of our love for him. Our lives should be open, welcoming and encouraging to others - a pathway to Jesus. So, to quote the famous scene in the film 'When Harry met Sally', they say to themselves, 'I'll have what she's having!' How are you doing this?



Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;
make you his service your delight,
your wants shall be his care.

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
the God whom we adore,
be glory as it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Psalm 34 in 'New Version'

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, you want me to trust you in trouble and in joy, and praise your glorious name. Accept, Lord, my love as poor as it is, and nurture my faith. May it have the strength to thrive in all conditions.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you taught your disciples to be open and welcoming, encouraging people to come and see. You did not want them to hinder anyone in their journey to faith. Inspire, Lord, your Church's welcome...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you knew that your team would have to put others before their own prejudices. You opened their eyes to the breadth of your Father's love. Lord, I lift up to you those who feel unwelcome...

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.**