

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 10 October 2021

Trinity 19

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. In this week's edition, Jesus is asked a very interesting question. 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life.' Jesus does not give this rich man a simple, standard answer. No. He looks deep into his heart to see why he is asking this question. He looks at his values in life. His response challenges and encourages to look at how we are living. Love of God, love of others should be at the heart of all that we do. If it is, then, hopefully, we are living in harmony with others and being generous with God's blessings. We should want to see fairness for others.

May God meet with you in these prayers and reflections. May his Spirit inspire and guide your daily living.

Every blessing,

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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 or the night,
waking or sleeping,
thy presence my light.

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

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Living by God's values

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 how you have lived in the past week, notice the times when you have shown your love for God and for your loved ones, friends, neighbours or strangers. This is when you were living by God's values. Give thanks for his guiding Spirit. Seek his help to live each moment with love in your heart. You are in his care.

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.

O God, forasmuch as without you
we are not able to please you;
mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit
may in all things direct and rule our hearts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer for this week is a lesson in humility. As I look at society today, it is easy to think that people have no need of God's presence. At a click of a button, all that we require or desire is available to us. But, this is not how life should be. As Christians, we know that there is so much more to life than this. At the heart of life is God's call to love him, to love creation, and to love others as ourselves. We cannot do this on our own. And so, our prayer is an invitation to God's Holy Spirit to be both our conscience and our guide. Only then can we live by God's heart's desires not our own. Pause to centre yourself on God's love. Listen and abide in his love.



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)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

A rich man asks a question

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.'" He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'

Mark 10:2-16

Reflecting on the question

I have been wondering why this wealthy man came to Jesus and, not just came, but asked this searching question, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Looking at how he asked his question, he does not appear to be one of the Scribes or Pharisees who are seeking to trip up Jesus by asking a hot potato of a question. He sounds like someone who is searching for the meaning of life. And, he clearly respects Jesus as one who speaks God's words as he has called him 'Good Teacher'. Yes, he is genuinely seeking the path that leads to heaven. But, can he take it? Let's look at Jesus' two-part response.

Reflecting on answer

What surprises me about Jesus' answer is that he doesn't say keep God's two greatest commandments, 'Love God with every fibre of your being, and love others as you love yourself.' Nor does he say, 'Accept me as God's Messiah and you will receive eternal life.' No, Jesus goes to the Jewish Law - the Ten Commandments - and lists those relating to living in harmony and fairness with others.

This rich man can affirm that he has not killed anyone unlawfully - no surprise there - that he has been faithful in his marriage and not broken anyone else's marriage vows - which is a good sign of his contentedness with life - that he has not stolen to acquire his wealth or lied or cheated either to get what he wants - which speaks to his integrity - and, finally, he has loved and respected his parents. From this we can imply, life has been good to him. But - there is a 'but'. A part two to Jesus' reply.

Jesus can see into our hearts and sense what we keep hidden. He sees into this man's heart. Yes, it is a faithful heart. One that has tried to live by God's commandments. But - if Jesus were to ask him this question, how would the rich man reply?

How have you used the wealth that my Father have given to you?

And this would be his stumbling block. You can keep all six of the Ten Commandments which are focused on living in harmony as a community of God's followers and miss the mark. You can avoid violent disputes.

You can keep your marriage vows and be a loving spouse. You can be open and honest in your dealings with others, including your parents. And, you can be satisfied with what you have. But... not share your God-given blessings with others... not live by the God-breathed value of:

As I have been given so shall I give.

Take a moment to contemplate this value in the light of the question (on previous page) which is the reason for Jesus' second answer to this rich man. How do they speak into your own life? Reveal your God-inspired living? And, perhaps, aspects of your life that he is calling you to work on? I've also been thinking about what our Gospel reading might say about the £80 per month reduction in Universal Credit, which came into force on October 1st. For those who have relied on this extra money during the long months of the coronavirus crisis, it will be a huge blow, especially as fuel and energy and food prices are rising. As a result of the reactions in parliament and in the press, the government has set up a 'household support fund'; the two downsides of which are you have to go and ask for a grant (never easy) and it is a lot less than the uplift they have lost. Perhaps, like the rich man, if you've always had more than enough to live on, you cannot imagine what it is like to try to live on less than enough. Maybe this is at the heart of Jesus' second response. Look outwards to others. Be as generous as God is. Pause to contemplate. How do others experience your generosity? And, you theirs?



Riches I need not, nor all the world's praise,
thou mine inheritance through all my days;
thou, and thou only, the first in my heart,
high King of heaven, my treasure thou art!

OUR PRAYERS

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

Generous God, you have given us a world that is rich with resources, and you know our every need before a word is on our mouths.

As I look at what I and my family have, I thank you,
help me to be content with enough and not seek more.

As you have given me in life so I try to share with others,
with family and friends and strangers. Let love be the key to my life.
Lord, hear my prayer.

Generous God, there is enough in our world for all to live,
and yet, still there are places where people struggle to survive.
Encourage world leaders to see what is happening and inspire them to
be more generous. Bless, Lord, the work of aid agencies. I pray for...
Lord, hear my prayer.

Generous God, your heart is full of love for me,
and, through your Son, I have received the gift of eternal life.
For this and all your blessings to me, I give you my heartfelt thanks.
And, I lift up to your loving care those whose sickness and sadness is
on my heart. I know that they are on yours too. I pray for...
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.**