

DAILY WAITING

NINE DAYS OF PRAYER 2021



CHANGED LIVES → CHANGING LIVES

DAY 5: PRAY FOR

Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4).

(This service is for use by individuals or groups and can be adapted to suit your context. Hymns, worship songs and additional prayers may be added as you wish. Italic text is intended as an instruction, plain text is to be read by a leader, bold text is to be read together.)

GATHERING

As you begin your time of prayer, take a moment of silence to remember and delight in the promise of the Holy Spirit Jesus gives to all his disciples.

Read the following from John 14 together:

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth... On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

Make a sign of being present to God and one another – light a candle, open a Bible, share the peace...

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Come, Holy Spirit, be with us as we pray

And leave us not as orphans.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us in body, mind and spirit

And send us out to be your presence in your world.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Optional hymn or worship song.

LISTENING

Jesus heals a deaf man with a speech impediment

³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

(Mark 7:32-35, NRSV)

REFLECTING

We don't know how long this deaf man might have been waiting for a cure, or how much longer he'd have gone on suffering, had his friends not brought him to Jesus and 'begged'. Maybe we'd call this more an action, or good turn, than a prayer. It's easy to keep the two separate in our minds. But in this story, the friends' action is a prayer, as are the actions of Jesus – his touch, his spit, his sigh. There is no dividing line between them.

Physical hearing loss is dreadful, but many of us with good physical hearing suffer from a more insidious loss – that of not listening with our heart and soul to God or the world around us. Sometimes we launch into prayer and open our mouths too quickly. Whether we are praying for people or events, we should be asking God to soften our hearts and open our ears to the way we may be called to respond.

God knows the needs of all for whom we might pray; so perhaps I should be praying for the next unknown person, group, minority, or nation I will meet or hear about, that I will be shown a way to fulfil God's purposes for me in this situation.

Most often, prayer and action won't see the immediate result we read about in Mark. Praying regularly for others is more like spreading fertilizer – enriching and strengthening us, bringing growth to our understanding and determination, until, like George Herbert, we exclaim: 'Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart/Could have recovered greenness?'

At times of desolation, when we most need to pray, we sometimes find that's exactly when it's most difficult. Then, all we can do is sit out the winter storm 'in the shadow of your wings', till we recognize we are being called to continue. Such waiting is painful, but necessary.

Let us not be disheartened if the answer to prayer seems distant – 'It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it', (quote from Pirkei Avot, Jewish ethical teaching of the Common Era). This is the lesson that the deaf man's friends learnt well that day.

PSALM

1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.
2 I cry to God Most High,
to God who fulfils his purpose for me.
3 He will send from heaven and save me,
10 he will put to shame those who trample on me. Selah
God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness.
For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the clouds.
11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.
(Psalm 57:1-3, 10-11, NRSV)

**Glory to the Father and to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now
And shall be for ever.
Amen.**

PRAYING

We pray to our ever-attentive God,
You who hear our clamour:
Open our ears to the cries of your world,

And our hands to participate in your plans;
That by co-operating with your Son,
We may bring healing to those you place in our path.
Amen.

We meet your Word in the voice of the suffering;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We express our thanks for your steadfast attention;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We offer you our prayers and actions together;
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**
We bear before you those with 'shrivel'd' hearts';
(Pause)
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We wait upon the work of your Spirit as we say the Lord's Prayer together:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with respite in the storm.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the words to speak your gospel plainly.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with patience when success seems overdue.**
Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with yourself.**

