

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



Daily Prayer *for Advent*

Hope - Peace - Joy - Love

Monday 4 December to Sunday 24 December 2023

Our Lord says, 'Surely, I come quickly.'

Even so; come, Lord Jesus.

Revelation 22:20

Welcome to this special edition of prayers and reflections for daily use during Advent. As we prepare to celebrate with joy and love the coming of God's Son at Christmas, we watch and wait and work with hope in our hearts as, together, we pray for Christ's peace to reign across the globe. Hope - Peace - Joy - Love is an alternative set of themes for our Advent candles. We will reflect on these with the help of four Bible readings from our Carol Services.

May these God-breathed passages inspire your Advent preparations and your Christmas celebrations. May God fill you with his hope and peace and his joy and love.

God bless,

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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.**

WEEK ONE

Hope

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

And now, O LORD, what do I wait for?

My hope is in you.

Psalm 39:7

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.

All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.

You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.

You know all that is on my heart,
every one of my worries.

Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read this week's passage and ponder today's reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent your hope-filled prayers.

Almighty God,
as your kingdom dawns,
turn me from the darkness of sin
to the lightness of hope,
so that I may be ready to meet you
in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Hope Light in the Darkness

God gave Isaiah this prophecy as his people were under threat from foreign forces. Even in the deepest depth of their fears, there is God and there is his light of hope. God promises a new king.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness -
on them has light shined.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests on his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
who has come to his people and set them free.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Monday - Finding hope in the darkness

December 4th

The people of God are besieged on all sides. Foreign forces and their northern neighbours want to take over their villages, towns and cities, homes and temple. Fear is all around them. Death and destruction are waiting in the wings; just as they are in today's war-torn countries. Imagine living in one of these nations. Imagine feeling the light of God's hope dawning in your lives. You're not forgotten.

Think about the darkness in your own life - past, present or future. How does the coming of God's Son at Christmas and the promise of his return fill you with hope? Where is his light in your darkness? Offer your prayers and praise.

Tuesday - Christ is our King

December 5th

Jesus was born to a young mother Mary. His link to King David's line is through his step-father Joseph. To human eyes, he was nowhere in the line of succession.

But, he is the one who will fulfil this prophecy. All authority will rest on his cross-pained shoulders. He will judge the great and the good as well as the lowly ones.

To him was given dominion and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

Daniel 7:14

When you think of the leaders who are causing the violence and suffering you see in the news, how does this verse give you hope? Offer up your prayers and praise.

Wednesday - What's in a name?

December 6th

God's King will be perfect as no monarch has been before or since. His names reflect his status and his perfection: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. These are names that point to God: the ruler who will bring justice, righteousness and peace is of God's line. He is divine.

What's in a name? Everything! What you call Jesus reveals who he is to you. Ponder your names for Jesus. How do they speak to his divine and eternal kingship, of his future return? How does this fill you with hope? Offer your praise and prayers.

Thursday - His kingdom is growing!

December 7th

Living and worshipping in a country where church attendance is in decline can lead you and I to think that Christ's kingdom is shrinking too. It is not! It is spreading across the globe and lives in the hearts of all his followers. It is building on the living faith of past generations as we work to share his good news with future ones.

Where do you see shoots of new growth? The light of hope? God's kingdom is alive and active. Offer your praise and prayers.

Friday - His kingdom is for ever!

December 8th

Even our late Queen's reign is short in comparison to God's. Each world leader has a beginning and an ending to their rule. As we wait on his return, Christ is ruling in heaven as he will do on earth at his return. His reign is for evermore.

How does this fill you with a sense of stability? Of God being the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and for all time? Offer your praise and prayers.

Saturday - Freedom!

December 9th

God's promise to Isaiah and his people ends with the gift of freedom. Christ's birth, his ministry on earth, his death on the cross and his rising again set us free.

How have you experienced this freedom? How does it fill you with hope on dark days? Offer your prayers and praise. If you wish, sing an Advent or Christmas carol.

WEEK TWO

Peace

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

May the LORD give strength to his people!

May the LORD bless his people with peace. *Psalm 29:11*

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.

All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.

You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.

You know all that is on my heart,
every one of my worries.

Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read this week's passage and ponder today's reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent your peace-soaked prayers.

Almighty God,
purify my heart and my mind,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again
as saviour and judge
I may be ready to receive him,
who is my Lord and my God.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Peace
A Kingdom of Peace

As God's people waited for their new and perfect king, Isaiah received this prophecy of peace. Imagine a world in which this comes fully true on Christ's return.

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall lie down with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together,
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD.

Isaiah 11:1-9

Monday - Good roots!

December 11th

Here God promises to his people that their new king will be of David's line as Jesse was the father of King David. For a tree to grow healthy and strong, it needs good roots such as these. Christ our King is deeply rooted in his Father's Spirit of love and wisdom and peace.

How are you rooted and grounded in the Spirit? How does this fill you with peace? Offer your prayers and praise.

Tuesday - Seeing with our hearts**December 12th**

Jesus could look into the eyes of someone and see right into their hearts. What he saw guided his response. He had a pure and true compassion for the vulnerable and for the lost, his one desire was to set them free to love his Father as he did.

Think about recent news items. If Jesus were to look into the eyes of those who are at the heart of this suffering, what would be his response? What should yours be? Offer your prayers and praise.

Wednesday - The Wolf and the Lamb**December 13th**

If a wolf were to lie down with a lamb, it's unlikely that the lamb would get much sleep! What is needed is for the lion to have a change of heart, and see the lamb as a friend not lunch. And, for the lamb to trust the lion's motives.

Think about one of yesterday's news items. What is needed for the wolf to lie down with the lamb in peace? If the situation feels hopeless, remember that Christ is King of all peoples and nations - both wolves and lambs. Offer him your prayers.

Thursday - No more war!**December 14th**

For a people facing the very real risk of invasion, God's promise that, one day, peace will be seen across the globe is so very powerful and moving. We have seen how violence can destroy lives and homes, and eradicate any hope of peace. God can see the new life and lasting peace that lies beyond this devastation.

Think about applying the image of a wolf and a lamb lying down together in peace, under the careful watch of a young child, to the situation in Israel and Gaza or in Ukraine and Russia. Where is Christ the King in this vision? Offer him your prayers and praise.

Friday - The earth is filled with Jesus!**December 15th**

This gloriously peace-filled vision will come true on Christ's return. The whole earth will know and accept him as our Prince of Peace.

Pause to drink in the peace of this vision. May Christ's peace dwell in your heart, and in all hurting hearts. Offer him your prayer and praise.

Saturday - God's peace**December 16th**

God's promise came true in the time of Isaiah, at the birth of Jesus and in his life, and keeps on coming true in our lives when we reach out in peace. It will be true.

Think about how peace is possible even in dark places when hope is placed in God's love for all peoples. How have you experienced this? Offer your prayer and praise.

WEEK THREE

Joy

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

You show me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy. *Psalm 16:11*

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.

All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.

You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.

You know all that is on my heart,
every one of my worries.

Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read this week's passage and ponder today's reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent your joy-inspired prayers.

Almighty God,
as I prepare with joy
to celebrate the gift of the Christ-child,
embrace the earth with glory
and be for me a living hope
in Jesus Christ my Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Joy A Song of Joy

Mary's song is filled with exuberant joy! She can't believe that God has chosen her to be the mother of his Son, our Prince of Peace.

And Mary said,
'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Luke 1:46-55

Monday - Let your heart sing!

December 18th

Mary has been on an emotional rollercoaster ride. She has been startled by the Angel Gabriel, shocked by his message and surprised by God's choice of mother for his Messiah. And now, as she visits another mother-to-be, her cousin Elizabeth, she at last can give full voice to her joy and praise.

This is the pure joy of Christmas. This is the pure wonder of God's own Son coming to earth to live with us and die for us so that we may have life in all its fullness. Think about the fullness of life you see and feel in Mary. Let your heart sing!

Tuesday - Wonder at God's love

December 19th

Mary's song begins with her expressing joy and delight at God's love for her, a young girl about to be married to Joseph. God is blessing her with his Son.

Contemplate the love that you see in Mary's story: God's love for Mary and Mary's for the God who is gifting her his Prince of Peace. Think about his love for you. Join in Mary's song of love. Offer your praise and prayers.

Wednesday - Wonder at what God is doing

December 20th

Mary's song continues by celebrating the way that God is turning the world upside down. The long-promised King is coming as one born into an ordinary family, as one born to serve rather than to be served. He will give his life so that we can have life. His will be a kingdom that grows from within - in our hearts - where deep and abiding joy will be sown. It will not be one of power and glory and status.

Contemplate the joy that you have experienced in following Jesus and knowing the depth of his Father's love for you. Offer your praise and prayers.

Thursday - A world turned right way up!

December 21st

Mary is so happy that God is turning his world right way up. His kingdom will be, once more, one of love. His love will touch the lives of those who feel lost, alone, suppressed and scared. As his Son will say, 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.' Joy is coming into their lives.

Think about who you would like to receive this joy at Christmas. Who in the depth of their struggles needs to know that God loves them? For our Saviour was born for them. Offer your prayers and praise.

Friday - God remembers

December 22nd

God's promise to Isaiah and the people of Judah was made over seven centuries before the birth of Jesus. God remembers his promises to us. He never forgets us, even when we overlook him. We can trust in his love.

Think about the wonder of this in Mary's song and in the shepherds' joyous shock as the angels announced the good news of the Messiah's birth. God is a God who remembers us. Offer your praise and prayers.

Saturday - God keeps his promises

December 23rd

Mary's song closes by celebrating the faithfulness of God. He keeps his promises, and will never let his people down. His promise to Abraham was for all generations as was his promise to King David and his descendants. We have a promise through Jesus which is for all time. Christ is our King. He will return. Our world will be as it was born to be.

Ponder God's faithfulness. Feel the love with which he keeps his promises through Jesus, his Son. With joy, open your heart to him. Offer your praise and prayers.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Love

Preparation

As you prepare to meet with God, pause to reflect on all that has happened so far today and what lies ahead of you. Offer them to God in silence.

I love you, O LORD, my strength. *Psalm 18:1*

Opening Prayer

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
You know the journeys that I take
and the places where I rest.
You know all that is on my heart,
every one of my worries.
Help me to let go of them,
for a while, as I spend time in your presence.

Amen.

Reading and Reflection

Read today's passage and ponder its reflection.

Our Prayer for this Week

If you wish, light a candle to represent your love-breathed prayers.

Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws me to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth:
accept my heartfelt praise
as I worship you,
my Saviour and my God.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

Conclusion

May the Lord make us ready for his coming in glory. **Amen.**

Love
Love with us

Isaiah called God's Messiah - Emmanuel, God with us. In the stable in Bethlehem, we see fully and clearly that God's love is with us and will never leave us.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:1-7

Sunday - Born in a stable

December 24th

I invite you to contemplate this scene. Mary and Joseph gazing in love-filled wonder on the baby Jesus. Mary's Son, God's Son. God's eternal love for them, and for all peoples, is here in Mary's tired arms filling this stable with love. His love will spill out across the globe. For now, it is here. Just here. Abide in his love.

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, Love's pure Light,
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace:
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

*Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)
trans. John Freeman Young (1820-1885)*

*Offer your gifts of love and praise,
and your prayers.*

May you have a Christmas filled with love and joy, peace and hope.

Revd Katrina

*Continue your Christmas journey with 'Follow the Star, Join the Song
12 days of reflections for Christmas and the New Year'.*