

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 15 May 2022

Easter 5

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. As we continue to explore how Peter lived up to his three-fold calling to care for Jesus' flock, his Church, we come to two beautiful readings: Jesus' instruction to love as he loves and how Peter is called to do this. It is such an apt reading as we witness the war in Ukraine. Where love is there is peace, where love is there are open arms of welcome.

Enjoy reflecting on how these passages speak to your heart and, also, to what is on your heart.

Every blessing,

Revd Katrina

Vicar

Phone No. 01604 812907

Mobile No. 07710 464675

E-mail: katrinahutchins94@yahoo.co.uk

Some of the material is © The Archbishops' Council 2005, 2014



Let there be love shared among us,
let there be love in our eyes.
May now your love sweep our globe;
cause us, O Lord, to arise.
Give us a fresh understanding,
affectionate love that is real.
Let there be love shared among us,
let there be love.

Dave Bilbrough (1841-1923) alt.

CCLI reported

**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Easter 5
Called to love and welcome**

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.

Risen Lord Jesus,
as I prepare to spend this time in worship,
I invite you to come and fill this space,
and my inner stillness,
with your presence. **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 our risen Lord in the silence of your heart. And, when you are ready, reflect on this verse from O Jesus, I have promised.

O let me feel thee near me;
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me and within;
but, Jesus, draw thou nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

John Ernest Bode (1816-1874)

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



Feel God's love and his forgiveness. You are being set free to love others as Jesus loves. How might this help you through today's and tomorrow's challenges? Offer what is on your heart to God and seek his loving and wise guidance.

When you are ready, reflect on the opening verse of today's hymn. This is the lesson that Peter is going to learn in our reading from Acts.

It is a lesson that our world is still struggling to learn.

What is God saying to you? Listen to his still small voice of love.



In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

John Oxenham (1852-1941)

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.*

Almighty God,
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:
grant that, as by your grace going before us
 you put into our minds good desires,
so by your continual help
we may bring them to good effect;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord.
Amen.

Our prayer is an invitation to listen. Not with our ears, God wants us to listen with our hearts - to listen with love - and shape our lives in response to his inner stirrings. Picture a world where everything is done with love, out of loving concern for others. How different it would be! Full of peace, generosity and kindness. Life would be good for everyone.

It is a truly beautiful vision. This is God's desire for all peoples - everywhere.

Like a jigsaw puzzle, each person - past, present and future - is part of God's vision for Planet Earth. By saying yes to him and seeking to live every day - hour - minute with love in our hearts, we become one of the pieces that has found its place in his picture. Even before his puzzle is complete, what life can be like... will be like... starts to be seen. All thanks to us doing the little bits of good that we can.

Which bits of good might you do this week?

How can God's Spirit help you?



Do your little bit of good where you are;
it's those little bits of good put together
that overwhelm the world.

Desmond Tutu

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

The New Commandment

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

John 13:31-35

Love one another...

It is Thursday evening. Judas has left the room to do what he has been paid to do - betray his friend - as Jesus speaks to the remaining eleven knowing his time is short. All of his teaching over the past three years is captured in this one simple yet challenging instruction.

*Love one another.
Just as I have loved you...*

John 13:34

Gone will be the jockeying for position... wanting to be the greatest ones... gone will be the little hurts and slights that caused Peter to ask Jesus, 'Lord, how often should I forgive?'... all will be united in doing what Jesus will commission them to do - spread his good news. Or, that's the theory! Building his church would not be without its challenges. There will be differences of opinion and issues to resolve. If they can work through these with love in their hearts, respecting each other's views, they will be able to create a church that people flock to join. For it will be a family of faith that looks and feels like Jesus. Love is how we think of Jesus. Love is what we see in his disciples as they build his church.

Think of last week's story of Peter and Tabitha. Peter saw how much the widows loved Tabitha, and how loving Tabitha had been to the widows, and he was moved to pray for her to be brought back to life. Why? Because love inspired him to do this.

Perhaps, you too have been inspired by love in the past week. Maybe, you have done a simple act of kindness. If so, recall how it felt to do this. You were radiating the love of Jesus... sharing his good news... causing others to wonder about why you do what you do.

As the disciples built the church to be as loving as Jesus, sometimes, God's Spirit called them to love beyond the limits of their own love, as we will hear in our reading from Acts.

All are welcome...

Peter recalls. “Recently I was praying in Joppa. I fell into a trance and saw a vision: Something like a huge blanket, lowered by ropes at its four corners, came down out of heaven and settled on the ground in front of me. Milling around on the blanket were farm animals, wild animals, reptiles, birds - you name it, it was there. Fascinated, I took it all in.

“Then I heard a voice: ‘Go to it, Peter - kill and eat.’ I said, ‘Oh, no, Master. I’ve never so much as tasted food that wasn’t kosher.’ The voice spoke again: ‘If God says it’s okay, it’s okay.’ This happened three times, and then the blanket was pulled back into the sky.

“Just then three men showed up at the house where I was staying, sent from Caesarea to get me. The Spirit told me to go with them, no questions asked. So I went with them...”

Acts 11:4-12 (The Message)

Peter’s natural instinct is to be cautious about sharing the good news of Jesus with those outside of the Jewish faith. To his Jewish eyes, they are as unclean as the food that the Hebrew Scriptures forbid him from eating. He thinks that he should not accept invitations to go to their houses. God’s Spirit opens his eyes. This vision shows him that God’s love is without limits and Peter’s should be too. All are welcome in God’s church. All are loved by him. As you contemplate this second verse from today’s hymn, think about where there are divisions and differences in your life... in the world... seek God’s loving and wise guidance.



In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christ-like souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.

OUR PRAYERS

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

Risen Lord, you call us to love as you love,
without limits. Help me to look at my life through your eyes
so that I may see how my love mirrors yours.

Where I place limits on my love and compassion,
remove these barriers. Set me free, like Peter, to welcome everyone.

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Lord, you gave Peter a vision of how your church should be,
a world vision. Speak into the hearts of all world and business leaders,
and community champions, challenge them to create countries,
towns and villages that are free from divisions. I pray for...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Lord, you called your church to love and care for those
who are vulnerable. Lord, I try to care as you care,
and I hold on my heart all of my family, friends and neighbours
who are struggling with ill-health, grief and loneliness.

In my love, may they see your love. Lord, I pray for...

Risen 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 Eastertide.

Risen Lord, come and meet me where I am,
this Eastertide. Fill me with love and joy and peace,
so that I may offer your hope to others.

Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**