

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 25 January 2026
Epiphany 3**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. This week, we listen as Jesus gives his first sermon. He likens himself to the light come to lighten the darkness in people's lives. He is fulfilling God's promise to his people at the time of Isaiah. It is a bold revelation.

Enjoy pondering how Jesus is your light in the darkness.

Every blessing,

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*As you prepare to listen to our Lord's first sermon,
offer your love and praise to him.*



O for a thousand tongues to sing
my dear Redeemer's praise,
my dear Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace,
the triumphs of his grace,
the triumphs of his grace!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

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Light

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, when you are ready, reflect on our Lord's grace and love.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace,
'tis life and health and peace,
'tis life and health and peace.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)



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

Our second verse speaks of the love and compassion, and forgiveness, Jesus brings into our lives and into the world's darkness. Thinking of Jesus and all the good that did during his earthly ministry can be a source of peace and hope. Connecting with Jesus on a one-to-one basis can turn around our lives. He can free us from past mistakes – present worries – future fears. Knowing that he is with us is such a blessing.

Take some time to ponder your own experience of this. How can he bring you life and health and peace as our verse says?

When you are ready, offer him your love and praise in these words from Psalm 27. Say these verses as many times as you wish.

The Lord is my light,
my light and salvation:
what shall I fear?
What shall I fear?

The Lord is my light,
my light and salvation:
in him I trust,
in him I trust.

cf. Psalm 27:1

This psalm of trust in God ends with these lines. Sometimes, we need to wait patiently as we try to discern our Lord's loving plans for our lives. Sometimes, his light of hope builds slowly within us. If you are waiting, may this verse encourage you to trust in God's love and loving plans.

Wait for the Lord,
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

Psalm 27:14

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly circle of prayer to our God on high.

God of all mercy,
your Son proclaimed good news to the poor,
release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed:
anoint us with your Holy Spirit
and set all your people free
to praise you in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer is a perfect link into our Gospel reading and how Jesus shows that he is the light in our darkness. When the sun rises, when a light is switched on, it is no longer dark. At the very least, as with a torch, darkness is pushed away from us. We are set free to take the next step.

Jesus did what our prayer says. He calls us to do the same – to be people who try to push back the darkness in the lives of family, friends, neighbours and strangers. We are called to do so in our Lord's name rather than in our strength alone.

Take a moment to ponder these two questions.

- ★ Think about the people who are on your heart.
What is the darkness that is overpowering their lives?
- ★ What might you do to bring the light of hope
and/or push back the darkness?

Pray for them.

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

Isaiah 9:2



Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ,
your loosened tongues employ,
ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
and leap, ye lame for joy!
and leap, ye lame for joy!
and leap, ye lame for joy!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Jesus begins to preach

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali – to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

‘Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles –
the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.’

From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and illness among the people.

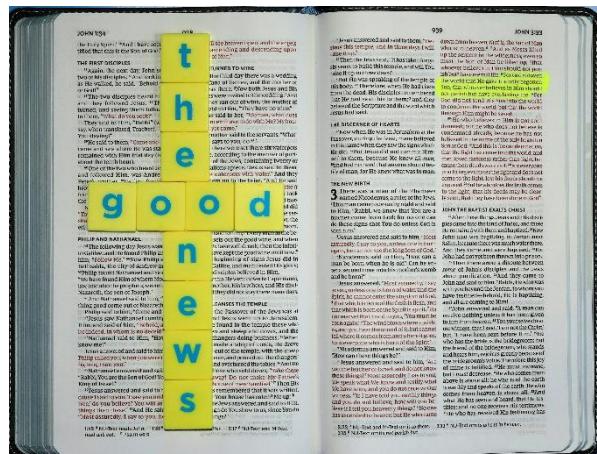
Matthew 4:12-23

Being a light that dispels darkness...

Jesus was a beacon of light – a refreshing light – in the darkness of the people's lives. Life was tough for the ordinary people of the Galilee. Occupied by the Romans, they had rules to obey and taxes to pay; starvation was only one failed crop or illness away. They were yearning for some good news – God's good news.

Jesus tells the people that he is the long-promised light – the Messiah. Words of hope are followed by love and compassion fuelled actions. Jesus heals the sick. Those weighed down by pain and ill-health are set free to earn their keep and sing God's praises. As our previous verse says, 'Leap, ye lame, for joy!'

I'm sure that the joy stayed with all those touched by Jesus' words of hope or by his loving actions. They would not have been able to keep such good news to themselves. They would have passed it on naturally to family and friends. How might you do the same?



My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
assist me to proclaim,
and spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of thy name,
the honours of thy name,
the honours of thy name.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, you are the Light of the World. You can dispel the darkness in our lives. You have the power to hold back my fears. You are my peace, my joy and my hope. Lord, receive my love and my praise...
Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you see the suffering of those living in today's war zones or under oppressive regimes. You hear the cries for freedom from those in prison for seeking change. Lord, you are their light in the darkness...
Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you see the pain in the eyes of those living with ill-health, with the frailties of old age. You know who is struggling to care for themselves or for a loved one. Lord, you are their light of hope...
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.**