

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 22 March 2026

Lent 5

Our journey to the cross is drawing to a close. Passiontide begins today, and we find Jesus close to Jerusalem and the cross. Mary and Martha write to him saying, 'Come quickly, Lazarus is very sick.' Their message begins a sequence of events which leads to one of our Lord's 'I am' sayings. What Jesus says and does points to his own resurrection and the new life he offers to each one of us. It is an invitation to believe.

Enjoy pondering how your belief in his promise shapes your daily life.

Every blessing,

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*As our attentions turn towards Holy Week and the cross,
transport yourself to Good Friday with this glorious Passiontide hymn.*



There is a green hill far away,
without a city wall,
where the dear Lord was crucified,
who died to save us all.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

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Believe

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love. You may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in this 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.

Father, as I prepare to spend this time in your presence,
I place myself into your hands.

Whatever you may do, I thank you:

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let your will be done in me,
and through me.

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, reflect on the words of this second verse of our Passiontide hymn.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
what pains he had to bear,
but we believe it was for us
he hung and suffered there.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)



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

Feel our Lord's love and compassion, and receive of his forgiveness.

Our second verse recognises how much our Lord suffered at the hands of the authorities: the mocking – the torture – the nailing – the slow death on the cross. God's own Son went through this for us. Take a moment to reflect on how much you mean to him. He was willing to go through this to draw you into the circle of his Father's love – to give you a new life on earth as well as in heaven.

As St. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, nothing can ever separate you from God's love thanks to our Lord's self-giving actions.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future,
nor any powers, neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in
Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

May you feel this truly and deeply as you ponder St. Paul's words, and as you say or sing the next verse of our hymn. Nothing you do, nothing you say or think will stop God loving you. May his gracious love inspire you to live for him and grow in his loving likeness.



He died that we might be forgiven,
he died to make us good,
that we might go at last to heaven,
saved by his precious blood.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

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 cycle of prayer to our God who always listens to our prayers.

Gracious Father,
you gave up your Son
out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer invites us to think about God the Father as we contemplate our Lord's suffering and death. Think about the Father watching on as Jesus is rejected by the Jewish elders, captured by the soldiers, put on trial for his life and condemned to death. At any point, the Father could have stepped in to save his Son but he didn't. Both put us first!



Pause to wonder at this. Offer your love and praise.

There was no other good enough
to pay the price for sin;
he only could unlock the gate
of heaven, and let us in.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

I am the resurrection and the life

Now a man named Lazarus was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay ill, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is ill.'

When he heard this, Jesus said, 'This illness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.' Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, 'Let us go back to Judea.' 'But Rabbi,' they said, 'a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?' Jesus answered, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.' His disciples replied, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.' Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. 'The Teacher is here,' she said, 'and is asking for you.' When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she

was going to the tomb to mourn there. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept.

Jesus came to the tomb. 'Take away the stone,' he said. 'But, Lord,' said Martha, the sister of the dead man, 'by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.' Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'

John 11:1-44 (abridged)

Believe in life and live believing...

Jesus makes a very important promise to Martha and to us. He said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.'

Easter Day shows us that God can do this – God will do this. Jesus rose again to new life and lives on in heaven. Death is not the end for us if we live our lives believing in this. Eternal life begins here on earth – now.

Jesus said, 'Do you believe this?'

Can you answer 'Yes!' to this? How does it influence the way you live?



O dearly, dearly has he loved,
and we must love him too,
and trust in his redeeming blood,
and try his works to do.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

OUR PRAYERS

Here are some Passiontide prayers. Feel free to add your own.

Lord Jesus, as I think of this story of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, I see the depth of your love for your friends. You wept with them. When I am filled with sadness, Lord, weep with me. Comfort me...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, overwhelmed by grief, Martha asked for the impossible, the return of her brother Lazarus. Today, you listen to the prayers of the despairing. Lord, grant them the courage to live, the faith to hope...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you revealed to Martha that you are the resurrection and the life. It is a promise of a life beyond this life – eternal life.

Lord, I believe. Daily, help me to live by this promise...

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.**