

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 16 August 2026
Trinity 11**

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. Jesus is taking some time out in Tyre and Sidon, a Gentile area north of Galilee. It feels like he is thinking about how to persuade the un-persuadable that he is God's chosen one – the Messiah. He is in for a surprise!

This passage is a challenging read. It is a lesson in the breadth of God's love. May it widen our love.

Every blessing,

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As you prepare to contemplate God's love, picture what it would be like if everyone felt welcome at church and in their communities.



Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Marty Haugen

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Prayers and Reflections
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God's love is for everyone

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, reflect on the words of this second verse.

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Marty Haugen – CCLI reported



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

Feel God's forgiveness.

Our second verse invites us to join in God's dream for our planet home: life should be just and fair for everyone. Everyone. It is a big, bold vision, one which we can believe in. Young or old or somewhere in between, strong or weak or average, rich or poor or OK living with what we have, we all have a part to play.

The simple but not always easy step is to reflect God's universal love in everything that we do. How we describe others – talk about others – speak to others should reflect that they are – like us – God's children. What we think or say or do should be sensitive how they would feel about our words and actions. Their lived experience may be quite different to our own. Our language, our behaviours should reflect this.

Pause to contemplate how this issue touches your daily life.

Think too about how this issue comes across in the news. Are there topics where you feel shocked by the lack of love or welcome or sensitivity to others. Pray about this.

Do you feel called to speak up? To be the change that God would love to see in our society today?



Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Marty Haugen – CCLI reported

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across the benefice and the globe.

Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our God of life and love.

God of glory,
the end of our searching,
help us to lay aside
all that prevents us from seeking your kingdom,
and to give all that we have
to gain the pearl beyond all price,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Our prayer reminds that we are lifelong seekers, lifelong learners. Life is an invitation to keep looking at ourselves – through God's eyes, through our own eyes and through the eyes of those whose lives we touch. This prayer is inviting us to think about what aspects of ourselves are fabulous – what are OK – what do we try to hide. It is those final bits which can hold us back from being truly kingdom people. Do you have any of these? If so, offer them openly to our Lord and seek his Spirit's guidance. Listen, how can you be a better version of yourself? More loving, caring, welcoming and/or accepting.

It's not all doom and gloom. Give thanks for the ways in which you reflect God's love thanks to his love for you.



Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Marty Haugen – CCLI reported

The faith of a Canaanite Woman

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.'

Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.'

He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.'

The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said.

He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.'

'Yes it is, Lord,' she said. 'Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.'

Then Jesus said to her, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Matthew 15:21-28

God's love is for everyone...

What Jesus says in this 'back and forth' exchange feels shocking. This is Jesus who ignores and then rejects this poor mum. It is all because she is a Gentile – a non-Jew – at a time when his focus is on his mission to God's people. When he is prayerfully pondering how to win round the Scribes and Pharisees who do not believe that Jesus is God's chosen one – the Messiah. So much opposition from the ones who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people. If they do not – will not – believe in him, how can his kingdom come? How?

He cannot afford to divert his attention from his prayerful pondering of this dilemma. How to win the hearts and souls of the resistant leaders so that the ordinary people stick with him?

He ignores this woman even though he has healed and helped non-Jews on previous occasions. How do you feel about this? Do contemplate this openly. Don't try to justify his initial rejection. Simply, look at what he said and did through your modern eyes – your own personal values.

Notice how his words – his use of 'dogs' – reflects the culture of his time. Think about how this style of language can be seen in today's deep divide between Israelis (position of strength) and Palestinians (position of weakness).

For me, I can understand why Jesus did this: what was on his heart, troubling him, causing him to hide away in the north. BUT. But this feels wrong. Wrong because no one should be looked down on just because they're different to us. Wrong because I would not expect to see this cultural prejudice in Jesus, who is a perfect reflection of God's love.

It feels like a two-way lesson in God's love and in our faith.

The woman learns that she can be persistent in her asking. She can parry what Jesus says and, thus, get what she is seeking for her daughter – God's gift of healing. She grows in faith through this exchange. She experiences God's love. It is for everyone.

Jesus is surprised by her faith. Her faith is what he would love to see echoed in the Scribes and Pharisees. This exchange fills him with hope.



Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured,
taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Marty Haugen – CCLI reported

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, your words challenge me. It is so easy for me to see others through my own eyes. My views are shaped by my life experiences, by the culture I grew up in. Open my eyes as this woman opened yours. Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, it is sad to think that cultural and religious differences still separate the people of the Middle East. Hardline Israelis look down on Palestinians, stateless Palestinians distrust Israelis. Lord, bring peace. Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, this mum would not give up on her daughter. She kept on asking and asking for healing. Her faith is so inspiring. When I feel like giving up, Lord, remind me of her persistence. Keep me praying.

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.**