

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 4 October 2026
Trinity 18**

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. In this week's parable, Jesus spells out the consequences of not doing his Father's will. We see both his own death at the hands of the authorities and how God is likely to judge the chief priests and elders who have rejected his Messiah. Can you also see God's love? I can.

Enjoy looking for the signs of God's love.

God bless,

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As you prepare to look for signs of God's love in our Lord's parable, celebrate who Jesus is to us.



Christ is the world's Light,
he and none other:
born in our darkness,
he became our Brother;
if we have seen him,
we have seen the Father:
Glory to God on high.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

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Prayers and Reflections
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Signs of God's Love

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 next verse.

Christ is the world's Peace,
he and none other;
no one can serve him
and despise another;
who else can unite us,
one in God the Father?
Glory to God on high.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)
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.

There is a truly beautiful phrase in this verse. Two linked lines go to the very heart of our faith and how our love for Jesus changes us. They are these lines:

**No one can serve him
and despise another.**

Take a moment to contemplate this message. Notice where in your life you are living by these words. Give thanks for the way that your devotion, your love for Jesus, changes the way that you think of others. Notice too where these words shine a light on an aspect of your life – your outlook – your prejudices (we all have them). What is our Lord saying to you? How can his Spirit retune your heart or your thoughts? Open yourself to him, gently seeking his help.

Imagine what our world would be like if everyone across the globe listened to this message. Thought about God or Jesus or the cross whenever they are tempted to look down on someone or not show them the respect that they deserve as a fellow human being. We are all made in God's image. When we forget this, we mar his image in us.

How beautiful would our world be if everyone loved as God loves, without any barriers or divisions!

Love changes everything:

Hands and faces

Earth and sky

Love

Love changes everything:

How you live and

How you die

from Aspects of Love

by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber

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 God whose love is unbreakable.

God, our judge and our saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Thankfully, I've never had to go before a judge, but I have seen enough TV dramas to know that this can be a very scary experience for defendants and a daunting prospect for witnesses. Love is not something that you expect to see on a bewigged judge's face. Sternness, yes! But love, no! But this is what we'll see when we look into God's expressive face as he weighs up the life we have lived on earth. We can trust in his love and compassion and, also, his mercy and forgiveness. Our trust is rooted in the self-giving, sacrificial life of his Son Jesus, our Lord and our Messiah. When we look at the cross and Jesus hanging there, we know – we truly know – how much God the Father loves us. For our Lord's love mirrors his Father's and God the Father was willing to risk his own Son to save us. What love is this! May it fill you with confidence. May it lighten your life.



Christ is the world's Life,
he and none other;
sold once for silver,
murdered here, our Brother –
he who redeems us,
reigns with God the Father:
Glory to God on high.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

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The Parable of the Tenants

Jesus said, 'Listen to another parable: there was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall round it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

'The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them in the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son," he said.

'But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance." So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

'Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?'

'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,' they replied, 'and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.'

Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures:

"The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvellous in our eyes"?

'Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.'

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Matthew 21:23-32

Signs of God's love...

Jesus told this story to shock and unsettle the chief priests and elders. He wanted to open their eyes to what God is doing in their very presence. Jesus is the latest in a long line of people who God has called – sent – to speak truth to power and restore justice. The chief priests and elders are repeating the past mistakes of kings and judges and religious leaders. They are failing to listen to God's messenger and his stark message, 'Accept my son. He is your messiah. Obey him.'

But I want us to look beyond this. We have recognised Jesus as God's chosen one – our Messiah. We have accepted him as God's Son. We do try to listen to his teaching and apply it in our daily lives. What I want us to do is to seek signs of God's love in this passage. Re-read the passage slowly. Notice what God is doing. Sense God speaking to you as you read again this parable of the tenants.

Each time that I re-read this passage, I saw more and more of God's love. It begins with his trusting this land that he loves to his kings and judges and religious leaders. He placed his people in their care. He believed in them. It continues with his many attempts to recall his chosen rulers and his people back to him. God does not give up on us even when we keep failing him. What love is this! Finally, God's Son comes to redeem his Father's wayward ones. Amazing love! And... Jesus told this story as a last ditch attempt to save the chief priest and elders. He loved them even as they frustrated him.



Give God the glory,
God and none other;
give God the glory,
Spirit, Son and Father;
give God the glory,
God in Man my Brother:
Glory to God on high.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

CCLI reported

OUR PRAYERS

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

Lord Jesus, your story speaks to me of your Father's love as well as his judgement and justice. I love the way that he did not give up on his people. I know that you'll never give up on me. Thank you!

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you shone a bright light on the failure of the leaders, past and present, to listen to your Father's messengers and their stern warnings. Keep speaking, Lord, to those leaders who do not listen...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you looked with love and compassion on your Father's lost and hurting, broken and fallen ones. Your words of healing and hope spoke to their hearts. Speak, Lord, to those on my heart...

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.**