

## **Morning Prayer**

In the name of Christ, who died and was raised by the glory of the Father, welcome: grace, mercy and peace be with you.

### **And also with you.**

We have come to the city of the living God to the heavenly Jerusalem,  
with thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

### **Alleluia!**

We have come to God the judge of all, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant with thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

### **Alleluia.**

### **Pause**

Lord, direct our thoughts, teach us to pray, lift up our hearts to worship you in Spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Christ our Passover lamb has been offered for us. Let us then rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

### **Pause**

**O Jesus Christ, risen master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.**

**We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.**

**We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.**

**We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.**

**In your mercy, forgive us. Hear us and help us.**

God who is both power and love, forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Collect**

God of truth, help us to keep your law of love and to walk in the ways of wisdom, that we may find true life in Jesus Christ your Son. Amen

### **Matthew 5:43-48 New International Version (NIV)**

#### Love for Enemies

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

## Thought for today

Our reading from Matthew comes again as part of Jesus teaching on the mount, it is one of the few times where the bible explicitly lays out what it is to be part of Gods Kingdom and a follower of God. It lays out how God wants us to live like as humans. Jesus talks about how we can have true happiness; he tells us that we are salt and light and to share and influence those around us with Gods goodness and praise him. He teaches them about following the Laws of Moses and that even the simplest of thought can lead us to break them. He teaches about our anger, adultery, divorce, and revenge, noting that each of these leads us to break Gods commandments. Jesus is telling His disciples that the standards that God has for us reflects the perfection of God. All of this is hard as it sets out an unreachable standard, we have all had thoughts that Jesus tells us break the relationship that God wants us to have with Him, the world and others.

And just when we thought, well that's me doomed to fail, Jesus rolls out our reading for today.

Love your enemies. The religious leaders of the time had corrupted the very word of God. The people knew that they were to love their neighbour because this was an explicit command from God. What was being taught was that if we love our neighbour then those that are not our neighbour do not need to be loved. Hatred of our enemy therefore was allowed by God. Jesus however corrected this by telling them that they should love their enemy and what's more they should pray for them.

The parable of the Good Samaritan demonstrates the type of love we should have for those around us. Jesus taught his disciples that they should show love to all kinds of people regardless of their faith, nationality, or personality, and this included their enemies like the Samaritans. Jesus shows Gods non-discriminating love for all people, and we as his followers should shine that love to those around us like a light on a hill or salt in the food. Jesus is teaching his disciples to reflect the character of God and exhibit this same indiscriminating love for both friend and enemies.

Jesus is teaching us that we need to live by a higher standard than the world, and it is a standard that is impossible to reach by our own efforts.

I have said on many occasions that it is easy to love the lovely, but much hard to love the unlovely. I find it very easy to love Rachel, but there are others .....

But be comforted by the fact that through the transforming power of Gods Spirit we can do exactly this, we can love and pray for those that intend us harm.

God wants us to be part of the process of ensuring that this world is cared for and looked after in ways that maintain its innate goodness. Creation was Good, and God wants to restore it back to this place. This may seem impossible, in fact at the end of this passage it calls for us to be perfect. But we are reminded by Jesus in Matthew 19v26 – With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.

We see on the news and on social media so much hatred and belittling of people, but God is calling us to set a new standard, a standard that marks us out as different, a standard that cares for all, a standard that seeks justice and insists that we care for each other regardless of the things that separate us. We are called to be peacemakers – Corrie Ten Boon in her book the Hiding Place tell how she forgave two Germans who had been cruel to them at the concentration camp where she and her sister had been interned.

And Brant Jean, 18 whose brother was killed by Amber Guyger an ex Dallas police officer who whilst off duty shot and killed a black man. Brant Jean used his victim impact statement to tell the court that despite what Amber Guyger took from his family, if she is truly sorry for what she did, then he forgives her and wants the best for her. He went on to ask – I don't know if this is possible, but can I give her a hug, please? He also told the judge that he had no desire for her to go to jail but for her to give her life to Jesus. As the two shared a tight hug, the courtroom was largely quiet except for the sounds of sobbing.

These two examples give us hope that what is horribly broken can be changed healed and restored. God wants to restore all our relationships in this same way. God wants us to live in love. He wants to transform our hearts and minds to be like Him. The Gospel is a story of God's love for us, even when we turn our back on Him.

Jesus shared with us the right way to live our lives, he showed that it was possible to live life in this way. So this week let us try to love as God loves and start the process of loving the unlovely.

Let us declare our faith in God.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high. We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intercessions

Lord God, make your ways known upon the earth: your saving power among all the peoples.

Renew your Church in holiness: and help us to serve you with joy.

Guide the leaders of this and every nation: that justice may prevail throughout the world.

Let not the needy be forgotten: nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Make us instruments of your peace: and let your glory be over all the world.

Pour your healing power upon us; and upon all those we love who are suffering at this time.

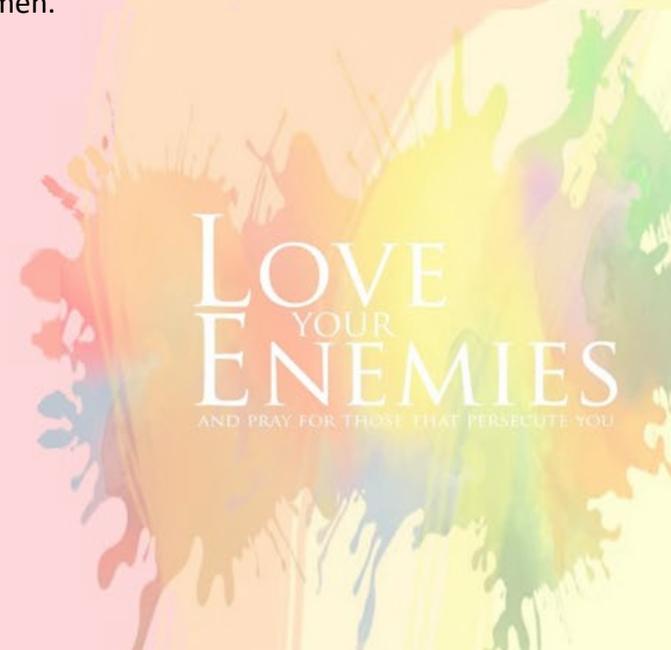
As you sent your Son into the world: so send us, to make your glory known. Amen.

All those who would like the anointing of oil please come to the communion rail.

And now may the Father, whose glory fills the heavens, cleanse us by his holiness and send us to proclaim his word. The Son, who has ascended to the heights, pour upon us the riches of his grace.

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, equip us and strengthen us in our walk with Jesus. Amen.

Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord In the name of Christ. Amen.



LOVE  
YOUR  
ENEMIES  
AND PRAY FOR THOSE THAT PERSECUTE YOU