

THE MIDDLE MARCHES – PRAYERS, READINGS AND THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK OF 26TH JULY 2020, 7TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

We continue to use J Philip Newell's Morning and Night Prayer from **Celtic Benediction** (Canterbury Press 2000 ISBN 9781853113376). Not everyone sleeps well – or they wake early. Maybe this week's Opening prayer for the Morning will provide some focus on waking. And the Evening's intercessions praying for those 'who cry out' surely resonates in these COVID times. Keep safe, everyone. Jonathan K



MORNING PRAYER

Long ago you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the works of your hands. They will perish but you endure; they wear out like garments but you are the same and your years have no end. – *Psalm 102:25-27*

Silence

Be still and aware of God's presence within and all around

Opening Prayer

In the silence of early morning your Spirit hovers over the brink of the day and new light pierces the darkness of the night. In the silence of the morning life begins to stir around me and I listen for the day's first utterances. In earth, sea and sky and in the landscape of my own soul I listen for utterances of your love, O God. I listen for utterances of your love.

Scripture and Meditation

Be still and know that I am God – *Psalm 46:10*

Jesus said, 'I give you eternal life and you will never perish' – *John 10:28*

Be still and reflect on those words

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

For the night followed by day, for the idle winter ground followed by the energy of spring, for the infolding of the earth, followed by bursts of unfolding, thanks be to you, O God. For rest and wakefulness, stillness and creativity, reflection and action, thanks be to you. Let me know in my own soul and body the rhythms of creativity that you have established. Let me know in my family and friendships the disciplines of withdrawal and the call to engagement. Let me know for my world the cycles of renewal given by you for healing and health – the pattern of the seasons given by you for the birth of new life.

Pray for the coming day and for the life of the world

Closing Prayer

In the busyness of this day, grant me a stillness of seeing, O God. In the conflicting voices of my heart, grant me a calmness of hearing. Let my seeing and hearing, my words and my actions, be rooted in a silent certainty of your presence. Let my life be rooted in the ground of your peace, O God. Let me be rooted in the depths of your peace. Amen.



NIGHT PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, for you give me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me. – *Psalm 116:7*

Silence

Be still and aware of God's presence within and all around

Opening Prayer

As it was in the stillness of the morning, so may it be in the silence of the night.
As it was in the hidden vitality of the womb, so may it be at my birth into eternity.

As it was in the beginning, O God, so in the end may your gift be born –
so in the end may your gift of life be born.

Scripture and Meditation

With my whole heart I seek you, O God:

I treasure your word in my heart – *Psalm 119:10-11*

Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid – *John 14:27*

Be still and reflect on those words

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

For the darkness of the night – enveloping the earth, enclosing the day's labour – thanks be to you, O God. For the quiet that surrounds me and your promise of peace deep within me – for the stillness of sleep for my body and the hope of healing for my soul – thanks be to you. I bring not only my own weariness, but the tiredness of people who struggle this night. I bring not only my own pain, but the sufferings of those who cry out. Hear my soul's prayers for rest, O God – hear my heart's plea for healing.

Recall the events of the day and pray for the life of the world

Closing Prayer

The stillness of God be mine this night, that I may sleep in peace. The awareness of the angels be mine this night, that I may be alert to unseen mysteries. The company of the saints be mine this night, that I may dream of the river of love. The life of Christ be mine this night, that I may be truly alive to the morning – that I may be truly alive. Amen.



Here are this week's Collect and set readings –and a few 'Provokers'.

Collect Generous God, you give us gifts and make them grow: though our faith is small as mustard seed, make it grow to your glory and the flourishing of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Kings 3:5-12 ⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask what I should give you.' ⁶And Solomon said, 'You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?'

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.'

Psalms 119:129-136 ¹²⁹Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. ¹³⁰The opening of your word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. ¹³¹I open my mouth and draw in my breath, as I long for your commandments. ¹³²Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. ¹³³Order my steps by your word, and let no wickedness have dominion over me. ¹³⁴Redeem me from earthly oppressors so that I may keep your commandments. ¹³⁵Show the light of your countenance upon your servant and teach me your statutes. ¹³⁶My eyes run down with streams of water, because the wicked do not keep your law.

Romans 8:26-39 ²⁶The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, ³⁹nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:31-33,44-52 ³¹Jesus put before the crowd another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³²it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.' ³³He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.

⁴⁴The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' ⁵²And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

Provokers....

- The kingdom of heaven is like those teeny actions that don't really show - don't seem important - and yet produce results far bigger than we could have imagined when started. As St David is credited: "Do the little things in life."
- And the kingdom of heaven is also recognising the precious value of those little things and giving one's all to hold onto, and treasure, them.
- But knowing when those little things have become My obsession, rather than God's focus, requires Solomon's "understanding to discern what is right."
- But above all, in all we do and all that happens to us, and to our neighbours, we must take comfort from St Paul that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen to that!