



## *St Michael & All Angels, Chetwynd*

### The Collect for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity

*(Book of Common Prayer)*

**Let thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

As was the case last week with Trinity 9, this collect is found in the Leonine Sacramentary, which may go back at least as far as the Pope after whom the sacramentary is named, Pope Leo (440-461). In the Sarum Missal it features as the collect for this same Sunday, and it was translated into English from Latin for the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, ancestor of the 1662 Prayer Book. It is also retained in Common Worship (2000) as the collect for this Sunday, in modern English.

“Thy merciful ears” is an arresting expression. In various places in Scripture, especially in the Psalms, there are requests to God to hear prayers, and God’s ear or ears are used as metaphors for his listening. Examples include Psalm 17:6: *“I have called upon thee, O God, for thou shalt hear me: incline thine ear to me, and hearken unto my words”*; and Psalm 31:2: *“Bow down thine ear to me: make haste to deliver me”*.

Psalm 34:15 contains wording which is echoed in the collect: *“The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous: and his ears are **open to their prayers**”* (my emphasis). Here is another example of the way in which the collects reflect the themes and words of Scripture. Those who composed these prayers were so shaped by the knowledge of the Scriptures that they drew on them very naturally, with the result that the collects are a veritable mosaic of Biblical themes and allusions.

The collect asks our Father in heaven to hear our prayers, and to help us shape them so that what we pray for comes about (“that they may obtain their petitions”). We seek “to ask such things as shall please” him. To learn how to pray in this effective way means that first of all our own ‘ears’ need to be open to his message of transforming love. That message is conveyed to us through our praying and shared worship and, most importantly, through Scripture. In the four Gospels we find the words and deeds of Jesus, who ushered in God’s Kingdom of love and mercy.

He taught his followers that their prayers should be shaped by the priorities of God's kingdom: *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*" (Matthew 6:10a).

And he challenged his followers to be attentive to him and to be changed by him: "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matthew 13:9, 13:43b, 11:15, Mark 4:9 & 4:23).

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