

## Morning Prayer: Readings and Reflections

For Monday 11<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March

Exodus 2:11-22

Hebrews 9:1-14

Hebrews 9 makes it clear that we are right to see that the Old Testament is full of people and institutions that point forward to the coming Saviour. Moses was rescued from death through water so that he may become a rescuer of his people. Like God he sees the oppression of his people and decides to act. But like so many other generations of Israelites, the people reject the one sent from God (Acts 7:25-29). This generation, like the generation in the wilderness and the generation who rejected Jesus, will miss out on the experience of God's salvation. In the meantime Moses goes to Midian. After reading Genesis we should not be surprised that when a man meets some women at a well the conversation soon turns to marriage. Like the LORD will do later in Exodus, Moses drives away the oppressors and provides water for the flocks. It is an act of rescue that leads to life together. God doesn't simply rescue us from sin. He rescues us for relationship.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

**PRAY:** Give thanks to God for Jesus. Pray that the Bible will help you hallow his name.

### Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March

Exodus 2:23 – 3:20

Hebrews 9:15-28

Look at the character of the LORD in these verses. He hears the groaning of his people and "he remembered his covenant" (v24). This verb is at the very centre of the story of the Flood (Gen. 8:1) – when God "remembers" it means he is about to act and everything is about to change. Then look at the beautiful verbs of Exodus 3:7-8 as they point you to Christ. The LORD Jesus says "I have seen the misery of my people... I have heard them crying... I am concerned about their suffering... So I have come down to rescue... and bring them up..." Jesus stooped down, shed his blood, and as our High Priest carries us on his heart right up into God's presence. He has done it once and for all. The God of the burning bush, the Angel (i.e. "Sent One" or "Messenger") of the LORD, reveals his name as "I AM WHO I AM", or Yahweh, or "LORD" in most English translations. Whenever you read the word "LORD" think of the promise-keeping God, the Creator who sees us and hears us, the Saviour who has come down to rescue us. All of God's character is packed into his name, which is why "Jesus is LORD" is such good news.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

**PRAY:** Pray that those who experience misery, tears and suffering will know Jesus as Lord.

### Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March

Exodus 4:1-23

Hebrews 10:1-18

Moses has been given a task that seems impossible: to approach hard-hearted Pharaoh and lead Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. He is overwhelmed by the task and fails to find confidence in God's character, God's promises or even the miraculous signs of God's presence with him. The signs show the LORD is stronger than the snake-like Pharaoh, that he can heal leprous hearts (Moses is asked to put his hand "inside your chest") and that God can expose the death that has filled the Nile. God is determined to act on behalf of Israel, his "firstborn son". There is a task even more difficult than rescuing Israel: the task of cleansing sinners and leading us to glory. But Jesus came, made the perfect sacrifice, and has now sat down. The work is finished. All your sin, all your doubts, all your failings: Jesus has cleansed you from it all.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

**PRAY:** What are your fears? Ask God to provide daily what you need to overcome fear.

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March**

Exodus 4:27 – 6:1

Hebrews 10:19-25

Pharaoh is a picture of Satan, the harsh tyrant who enslaves people to sin and the ways of the world. His ways are slavery. He demands more and more but sin never satisfies. Following the world or our own selfish desires means a life of always striving, never resting. In contrast, Hebrews 10:19-25 is an invitation to draw near to God, to live with hope. These verses remind us that true freedom means encouraging one another, spurring on our brothers and sisters in Christ towards love and good deeds. (As an aside, did you know that the book of Hebrews is like a salad, full of lettuce? Read through Hebrews and take note of all the “let us” verses. Write them down. Turn them into prayer.) In Egypt, Israelites scatter all over the land to look for straw. This means all of Egypt knew about the oppression and enslavement of Israel. God is about to reveal his “mighty hand”. Will Pharaoh and the nation turn from their wicked ways?

“And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”

**PRAY:** Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Confess the ways you have disobeyed these verses. Then consider who needs encouragement from you today and begin by praying for them.

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March**

Exodus 6:2-13

Hebrews 10:26-39

Encouragement, warning, encouragement. That is what we have in today’s passages. Encouragement: Look at God’s determination to save! How many times does the LORD say “I will...” in Exodus 6? Christianity is not you and I saying “I will”. If it was, our weakness would be our downfall. Instead, we depend and trust on God’s “I will” and his “I have”. Warning: Hebrews 10:26-31 warns us. There is no hope, no salvation if you reject the “I will” and the “I have” of the Son of God. It is an insult. It brings judgment on yourself. Encouragement: Belonging to God can sometimes make life more difficult (Ex. 6:9). Some Christians face insults, persecution and imprisonment (Heb. 10:32-34). But faith encourages us to persevere. “Do not throw away your confidence, it will be richly rewarded.” We trust a God who will give us all he has promised.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

**PRAY:** Remember the persecuted church and pray that they will persevere with faith. Pray that your own temptation to wander from Jesus will be overcome by confidence in God.

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March**

Exodus 7:8-24

Hebrews 11:1-16

A showdown is starting. Pharaoh claims Israel as his slaves. God says Israel is his son. Pharaoh thinks he and Egypt’s gods are in control. The Living God is going to judge Egypt, to show that their gods are false and that their oppression of the Israelites will not go unpunished. Egyptians saw the Nile as their source of life. Suddenly it becomes a river of death; this is fair and just judgment for the times when babies were thrown into the river. It is good news that God judges the wicked. It is good news that the false gods of this world (e.g. money, popularity, possessions, self-sufficiency) are overthrown, because they could never deliver. The real source of life is Jesus, and the blood that flowed on his cross. As we trust in him, we join the list of the heroes of faith.

“For the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.”

**PRAY:** Various kingdoms of the world claim supreme authority over people. Worldly powers try to seduce us. Give thanks that supreme power belongs to our Father.

Collect for Fourth Sunday of Lent (use it every day):

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

## Morning Prayer: Readings and Reflections

For Monday 18<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024

### Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March

Exodus 8:1-9

Hebrews 11:7-31

One reason God sends the plagues is “so that you may know there is no one like the LORD” (v10). Israel’s God is not a new, more powerful god. The sheer variety of plagues demonstrate that the LORD is the one true Creator, with power to control every part of creation. The LORD does not act in order to add himself to the pantheon of Egypt’s gods. He comes to replace them all. The first nine plagues come in three sets of three with this pattern: Moses meets Pharaoh in the morning, he returns, then there is no warning. The first set (blood, frogs, gnats) shows the LORD’s power is greater than Egypt’s magicians. They are also plagues that bring inconvenience rather than destruction. The LORD proves his supremacy even as he sends relatively gentle warnings, but Pharaoh will not listen. All plagues and disasters contain a note of warning (Luke 13:1-5), urging people to turn to Christ and join his church, even if that means ill-treatment or disgrace. Christ’s reward is greater than any earthly treasure (Heb. 11:24-26).

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

**PRAY:** Pray that our nation honours God by recognising that Jesus is greater than riches.

### Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March

Exodus 8:20-32

Hebrews 11:32 – 12:2

Moses tells Pharaoh that the people “must take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD” (v27, 5:3). Is this a lie to deceive Pharaoh? No. The Third Day is the day of life, world-changing life, when death and evil loses its grip on God’s people. On the third-day of his journey to offer a sacrifice, Abraham experienced a taste of the resurrection (Genesis 22:4-5, Hebrews 11:19). When sacrificial death brings about resurrection life slaves are set free to serve their new Lord. What does that new life look like? Is it all victory and happiness? Hebrews 11:32-38 is important for setting our expectations. Some see miracles and victory. Others face persecution and death. The LORD never promises an easy life. He promises “something better”. Let the ancient church cheer you on to run the race of faith.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”

**PRAY:** Surrender your life to God’s will. Pray that, in all things, you fix your eyes on Jesus.

### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March

Exodus 9:1-12

Hebrews 12:3-13

What is going on with Pharaoh’s heart? Sometimes we see Pharaoh harden his heart, wilfully refusing to obey the Creator. At other times God “hardens” Pharaoh’s heart, but here a different Hebrew word is used. God actually *strengthens* Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh is resolved to resist the LORD and God strengthens that resolve. Why? If Pharaoh gave up because he felt weak then his belief in many gods (and his own divinity) might not actually have been changed. Everyone needed to learn that the LORD’s victory was not because he was a stronger god, but because he is the Only True God who has no competitors. Tyrants and wicked people need to realise they are *wrong* not simply that they have been overpowered, or else their hearts might not be changed at their deepest level. Sometimes God judges the world by causing false beliefs and powers to grow in strength before shattering them. All ideologies must give way to Jesus Christ the Lord.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

**PRAY:** Daily struggles for Christians are not acts of God’s judgment but the loving discipline of a heavenly Father (Heb. 12). Pray for daily faith to help endure hardship.

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March**

Exodus 9:13-35

Hebrews 12:14-29

The second set of three plagues (flies, livestock, boils) showed the LORD making a distinction between Israel and Egypt, between his people and Pharaoh's people. The third set (hail, locusts, darkness) brings devastating destruction on Egypt. Every satanic force and oppressive system that sets itself against Christ and his church will be destroyed, either in history or when Jesus comes to judge the earth. But some Egyptians "feared the word of the LORD" and acted accordingly. They were finding true wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). When the Israelites left many Egyptians followed them and were saved. Are you following Jesus in the company of his church? Read Hebrews 12 and note what is true about you: you HAVE come to the heavenly Jerusalem, your name IS written in heaven, you ARE receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. So "let us be thankful".

"And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."

**PRAY:** Confess the times you have "ignored the word of the LORD" (Ex 9:21).

**Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March**

Exodus 10

Hebrews 13:1-16

Nothing hardens the heart of an arrogant person more than being forced to choose between humility or stubborn pride. Pharaoh wants to retain his control so when his officials urge him to recognise reality he tells Moses the people can go. But just the men. Moses rejects the offer. There can be no true worship of God unless women, men and children are all together. (Why not stop now and pray for the children in your church family?) Then comes three days of darkness, as God's fierce anger burns. One day Jesus would die after three hours of darkness, bearing the anger of God against our sins, his blood shed for our forgiveness. We who are forgiven and set free must now worship God "acceptably with reverence and awe" (Heb 12:28). What does that look like? Loving each other. Honouring marriage. Contentment. Bearing the disgrace of Christ. Praising him with our lips. Sharing with others. Hebrews 13 is all-life, all-age, humble worship.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

**PRAY:** Consider the great evil of pride (Ex 10:3). Is pride hindering you from keeping the commands written in Hebrews 13? Ask God to deliver you by humbling you.

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March**

Exodus 11

Hebrews 13:17-25

We reach the tenth plague: the plague on the firstborn. Israel is God's firstborn son, who Pharaoh tried to murder. Now, divine justice is coming (see Exodus 1:22, 4:22-23).

Warning after warning was given; God is patient: "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come" (2 Peter 3:9-10). Is there any hope of salvation, some way the Lord's anger might pass over the wicked? We must wait nine days before reading Exodus 12 but next week – Holy Week – will show us how the living God saves his people. There are greater wonders than those performed by Moses and Aaron, wonders that bring freedom and life from God. In the meantime, turn each verse of the Hebrews reading into prayer. Remember, there is something even stronger than the judgment of death: there is a Shepherd who has conquered the grave!

"For the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever. Amen."

**PRAY:** As Holy Week starts tomorrow pray that your church leaders will be strengthened by joy (Heb. 13:17) so that God's kingdom, power and glory may benefit your church.

**Collect for Fifth Sunday of Lent (use it every day):**

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Morning Prayer: Readings and Reflections

For Monday 25<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (Holy Week)

### Collect to be used Monday-Thursday:

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

This week I have added the Psalm(s) for each day. Read them as the words of Jesus then consider how you could make them your own words. Use them for reflection and prayer.

**Monday**          Psalm 41          Lamentations 1:1-12          Luke 22:1-23

Today and tomorrow we enter into Lamentations during Morning and Evening Prayer. This book plumbs the depths of sorrow at Jerusalem's destruction when Judah was exiled into Babylon. The author (Jeremiah, according to old tradition) knows that the city had "sinned greatly", yet he still weeps over the "bitter anguish". Jesus Christ wept tears over Jerusalem and her people, centuries later. His heart is moved by our weeping. He is distressed by those who are in distress. He enters into our suffering and will drink the cup of sorrow. For the sake of the broken-hearted he will be broken.

**PRAY:** Pray for those who mourn, who weep bitterly at night, who have no comfort.

**Tuesday**          Psalm 27          Lamentations 3:1-18          Luke 22:24-53

Read Lamentations 3 as the words of Jesus as he carries our sorrow and bears the penalty of our sin. Luke's gospel tells us Jesus was in anguish, with sweat like drops of blood. What was he feeling when he knelt in Gethsemane? Lamentations and many of the Psalms give us the holy privilege of hearing Christ's words of agony. This is how he felt. This is the weight he carried. He did it for you.

**PRAY:** In humility, give thanks that Jesus prayed "not my will but yours be done".

**Wednesday**          Psalm 102          Jeremiah 11:18-20          Luke 22:54-71

Jeremiah, the "weeping prophet", experienced something of what it means to walk the way of the cross. Like Jesus, he too was a lamb led to slaughter. Jeremiah had plots made against him, threats to "cut him off from the land of the living" (see Isaiah 53:7-8). Christ was crucified. His followers will take up the cross.

**PRAY:** Pray for the persecuted church and all who face the temptation to disown Jesus: ask God to strengthen them.

**Thursday**          Psalms 42-43          Leviticus 16:1-24          Luke 23:1-25

The sinner who approaches the Lord on his own terms will die. Jesus is the sinless High Priest who approaches God for us. He is the sacrifice who died the death we deserve. He is the scapegoat who carries our sins away. His blood is the answer to our wickedness, rebellion and uncleanness. You are Barabbas. Jesus dies, and you are set free.

### An extra prayer for Maundy Thursday:

God our Father, you have invited us to share in the supper which your Son gave to his Church to proclaim his death until he comes: may he nourish us by his presence, and unite us in his love; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Friday**                  Psalm 69                  Genesis 22:1-18                  Hebrews 10:1-10

A son climbs the mountain near Moriah, near the location of the temple in Jerusalem. The son carries wood on his back as he approaches the place where a sacrifice will be made. The father carries the fire and knife. Then the son is laid on the wood. On the mountain of the Lord, the Lamb of God was provided. The Son, God’s only Son, whom he loves, has died.

Collect for Good Friday:

Almighty Father, look with mercy on this your family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Saturday**                  Psalm 142                  Hosea 6:1-6                  John 2:18-22

Our love for God and neighbour can disappear like dew on a warm day (Hosea 6:4). There is no security if our relationship with God depends on our behaviour! Certainty and hope must be found in something solid and secure. The Israelites had a temple, where a relationship with God was established. But what if the temple is destroyed? What then?

“Come, let us return to the Lord... on the third day he will raise us up.”

“As surely as the sun rises, he will appear...”

Collect for Easter Eve:

Grant, Lord, that we who are baptized into the death of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ may continually put to death our evil desires and be buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection; through his merits, who died and was buried and rose again for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Evening Prayer Readings**

During this week make use of the Evening Prayer readings as well as those above.

Day	Psalm	Old Testament	New Testament
Monday	Psalm 25	Lamentations 2:8-19	Colossians 1:18-23
Tuesday	Psalm 55:13-24	Lamentations 3:40-51	Galatians 6:11-18
Wednesday	Psalm 88	Isaiah 63:1-9	Rev. 14:18 – 15:4
Maundy Thursday	Psalm 39	Exodus 11	Ephesians 2:11-18
Good Friday	Psalms 130 & 143	Lamentations 5:15-22	John 19:38-42
Saturday	Psalm 116	Job 19:21-27	1 John 5:5-12

As you read the Evening Prayer passages, consider

- a) the **compassion** and **anguish** of our Saviour, as he plumbs the depths of human sorrow and suffering;
- b) the **purpose** of Christ, coming to fulfil the Old Testament and achieve God’s salvation;
- c) the **benefits** for us of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

## Morning Prayer: Readings and Reflections

For Monday 1<sup>st</sup> to Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April

Exodus 12:1-14

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation for... everything. We take our stand on this gospel. We are saved by this gospel. It is “of first importance”. For the Israelites, God’s act of salvation was to be the starting point of every year; even as God gave instructions for the Passover he also gave instructions for it to be commemorated every year. The plague on the firstborn was a sentence of death. The firstborn son is the family member who represents the future but what future can there be when God judges a sinful world? Hope for the future comes through a lamb. The lamb is taken into each household to identify with the people, then, as a substitute the lamb is slaughtered. Blood on the door-frames is a sign to the LORD that the death sentence has already been carried out; judgment passes over the home where the innocent, perfect lamb of God has died. The difference between an Egyptian and an Israelite household is not that one was better than the other, it was that in one household the substitute’s blood had been shed. “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

**PRAY:** Give thanks that, in Jesus’ death, all the ‘gods’ of this world are shown to be false.

### Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Exodus 12:14-36

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

On Easter Day, Jesus stood up and led humanity out of the grave. The church, those united to Christ by faith, are those who follow. If Jesus has redeemed us, by his blood, from sin and death, what foolishness it would be to remain trapped in slavery. In Exodus the Passover lamb was eaten by people ready to leave Egypt, sandals already on their feet. With haste they ate bread without yeast, meaning “We’re not hanging around this life of slavery in Egypt. No, we are leaving as soon as we can!” O Holy Spirit, please give us this sense of urgency! Give us hearts desperate to forsake sin and follow the Saviour! In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul assumes that this life of following Jesus will make the world think we are to be pitied. (That’s something to ponder.) Rejecting sin often means turning our back on things the world values. Why do it? Because Christ is risen!

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”

**PRAY:** Where does God’s will clash with your own? Ask for help to leave the slavery of sin.

### Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Exodus 12:37-51

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Notice the detail in Exodus 12:38: “many other people went up with them”. In Exodus 5:12 we see that all of Egypt knew that the Israelites were oppressed slaves. No one was ignorant of the injustice in that nation. The plagues drew attention to the fact that the LORD God was separating out for himself a holy nation, his own people. Clearly many people heard the warnings, abandoned Egypt and joined Israel. The Lord even gives instructions as to how non-Israelites could join God’s people in the future (v48-49). A Gentile household could become like those born-again. This is why, in the book of Acts, when Gentiles turned to Christ they and their households were baptised – born-again – and became full members of God’s people. Even today, the Lord says to the whole world: “Leave this corrupt generation. Come join the church” (Acts 2:36-41).

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

**PRAY:** Pray that greed and corruption – the ‘enemies’ that cause people to hunger in a world of plenty – might be subdued, so that everyone can have their daily bread.

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April**

Exodus 13:1-16

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

Who are we? Three images are found here in Exodus. 1. We are *God's Firstborn* (the "church of the firstborn" Hebrews 12:23). That means we are children and heirs of God – loved by him and waiting for a glorious inheritance! 2. We are *Redeemed*. We have been purchased by the precious blood of Christ. "You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body." (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20) 3. We are *God's Army*. The LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt "by their divisions" (12:51) which is military language. In the words of the hymn *O Church Arise* "Our call to war, to love the captive soul, But to rage against the captor; And with the sword that makes the wounded whole, We will fight with faith and valour."

"And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."

**PRAY:** Ask for strength to wage war against any unwillingness to forgive (Col. 3:13).

**Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April**

Exodus 13:17 – 14:14

1 Corinthians 15:35-50

God is determined to save his people completely. That is why the Egyptian army will be destroyed (14:13). God causes Israel to look like they are wandering and so provokes Pharaoh to change his mind. In this way the LORD hardens Pharaoh's pride-filled heart in its self-destructive opposition to the living God; God will have the final victory even if, in the short-term, his people feel trapped in death (v11-12). God is also determined to save you completely. That includes your body! Do you feel your body is perishing? It will be raised imperishable. Do you sense dishonour and weakness in your body? One day your body will be glorious and powerful! Today, our bodies are driven by "flesh" and the way of fallen nature. At the resurrection, our bodies will be filled with the life of the Spirit! That's what "spiritual body" means. You are not trapped by death. One day you will bear the image of Jesus himself.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

**PRAY:** Are you tempted to unhelpful nostalgia? Ask God for hope. The best is yet to come!

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April**

Exodus 14:15-31

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

The LORD fights to deliver his people. This is an act of re-creation, as the Angel of God separates light from darkness and divides the waters to make dry land appear. The same wind (or Spirit) who caused the flood to recede, bringing Noah's ark to safety (Gen. 8:1), now drives back the waters of the sea to lead Israel to new life. In the darkness the LORD fights the powers of evil. At daybreak Israel's enemy is drowned in the waters (14:27) and Israel emerges into the light of freedom. Their passage through the water is a baptism, a drowning of evil and an act of new creation. In baptism we enter the waters of death and the God of resurrection brings us through safely into life and freedom. Like Israel, the new life is one in which we fear the LORD and trust in him (v31). That faith includes confidence that whatever we do for Christ will last forever. If Jesus has fought and defeated the enemy, bringing you into life, then you can "Give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."

"For the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever. Amen."

**PRAY:** Give thanks that every small, weak thing done for Jesus' glory is not done in vain.

Collect for Easter Day (use it every day):

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity. Amen.



## Morning Prayer: Readings and Reflections

For Monday 8<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April

Exodus 15:1-21

Colossians 1:1-14

“He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness ... into the kingdom of the Son”. Colossians 1:13 is Exodus in one verse. Miriam and the women, who had bravely resisted the darkness (Exodus 15:1-21, 2:7) lead the rejoicing. The enemy is destroyed. Imagine the singing that will take place when Jesus returns and the “last enemy” – death – is destroyed! This song contains phrases and imagery found all over the Bible; when we see those phrases we are meant to think of the Exodus. For example, the quote in Isaiah (12:2) helps us tune into the prophet’s message that a new Exodus will take place. Even in Revelation (15:3) we are reminded of the song of Moses. The song does not only celebrate God’s victory over his enemies; it looks to the future. The LORD is leading his people to his holy dwelling, to his sanctuary. This looks ahead to Sinai, to the Promised Land, to Solomon’s temple and ultimately to the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10). The journey out of slavery, through the waters and up to God’s mountain is the story of salvation, of a return to Eden. It is a true story that should make us sing and rejoice!

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

**PRAY:** Use the prayers in Col. 1:1-14 as you pray for God to be honoured in your church.

### Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April

Exodus 15:22 – 16:10

Colossians 1:15-29

We grumble when we focus on the small thing we don’t have, but forget the enormity of the salvation we do have! We grumble when we don’t believe that the God who sent his Son to shed his blood on the cross is also the God who provides our daily bread. It takes only a few days before the Israelites start complaining. Like Lot’s wife they want to return to sin and slavery. How can we fight against grumbling? Consider who Jesus is (Colossians 1:15-18), what he has done (1:18-22) and how we should respond (1:23). When we trust and obey Jesus the church becomes a source of living water that flows to the nations (symbolised in Ex. 15:27). When we grumble we are thinking only of ourselves and our present comfort. Paul, instead, chose suffering and strenuous contending, because he sought to make Jesus known. What about you?

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”

**PRAY:** Pray that God’s kingdom comes through your church being a place where Colossians 1:28-29 describe the normal Christian life and the priority of your leaders.

### Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April

Exodus 16:11-36

Colossians 2:1-15

A life built on Christ needs daily bread and weekly Sabbath (Exodus 16). Deuteronomy 8:3 tells us that the daily provision of manna was meant to teach the people that they must “not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD”. Luther said that the Sabbath command tells us “We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it.” Our journey from Egypt (the old life) to the Promised Land (glory with God in the New Creation) is only possible through God’s Word (16:35). And what a Word! In Christ are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). All other ways of thinking are hollow and deceptive. God’s word is more than bread: it is a feast!

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

**PRAY:** If your Bible reading has gone stale, beg God for new strength. Ask him to help you feed on his Word and enjoy its sweetness (Exodus 16:31, Psalm 19:10).

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April**

Exodus 17

Colossians 2:16 – 3:11

More grumbling. More grace from the LORD! God tells Moses to strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink. The LORD stood “by” (or even “on”) the rock, so when Moses struck the rock it was as if the LORD himself was being struck. He is our Rock of Ages. The water and blood from his “riven side” flowed to cleanse and restore us (John 19:34). The apostle Paul looked back to this and recognised that Christ is the true rock who provided spiritual drink for the people (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). He therefore warns us not to test Christ or to grumble against him. That would be to deny that the Lord Jesus Christ is with us (Ex. 17:7). The sin of Massah and Meribah is a warning to every generation (Psalm 95). When we sense selfishness and Satan tempting us to put the Lord our God to the test, remember that Jesus is also a Warrior against his enemies and an Intercessor whose constant prayer ensures our final victory.

“And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”

**PRAY:** Use Colossians 3:5-17 to confess your sins and trust in Jesus’ redeeming blood.

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April**

Exodus 18:1-12

Colossians 3:12 – 4:1

Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, heard about all that God had done for his people. He was told about “how the LORD had saved” Israel, about “all the good things the LORD had done” for them (v8-9). As God’s people we are called to speak these truths to one another. When we sing “psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit” we teach and admonish, encourage and correct one another, as God’s Word dwells among us richly (Col. 3:16). From there, the message goes out to all the world (4:3-6)! Our lives also should speak about the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul’s words to the Colossians are full of very practical ways in which ordinary life can speak of an extraordinary God. Church life, marriage, parenting, the workplace... how are you called to serve God and display the wonders of God? You ARE “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved” (v12). Now wear the clothes that show who you are.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

**PRAY:** Consider the specific areas of life mentioned by Paul. What temptations are trying to lead you astray? Pray, then pray similar prayers for a few other believers in your church.

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April**

Exodus 18:13-27

Colossians 4:2-18

Israel is about to receive the Ten Commandments, instructions from God so that they can be a priestly nation that reveals the LORD to the world (Exodus 19:5-6). This is a job for the whole nation, not just one leader, so Jethro helps Moses to structure the ancient church into small groups with an extensive system of pastoral care. Such wisdom! The “Jethro Principle” is vital for churches today. Paul also speaks of the many individuals who minister encouragement, comfort and prayer throughout various churches. Take time to pray with thanks for those who have encouraged you recently. Consider which of the named individuals in Colossians 4:7-18 you need to take as an example for your ministry in the coming weeks.

“For the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.”

**PRAY:** As you pray, you may think “But what difference can I really make?” Take heart. Prayers are answered not because of your abilities but because of God’s power and glory.

Collect for 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter (use it every day):

Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.