



## Opening Responses

As the day draws into its close,  
**we gather to watch and to pray.**

Open our hearts and ready our lips, O God,  
**and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.**

Our help is in the name of the Lord  
**who made heaven and earth.**

## Space for Silent Reflection on the Past Day

### Prayers of Renewal

Jesus told his disciples that if they wanted to follow him,  
they needed to deny themselves, and take up their crosses.  
God calls us into that same movement  
of dying to sin and rising again with Christ.  
In this quiet space for reflection,  
let us bring to God those things in need of renewal:

We bring to you those things for which we are sorry:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the times we've failed to love one another:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the burdens we carry and sorrows we bear:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the injustices and oppression in our world:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the failings and disunity of your Church:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

God of our journeys and false starts and new beginnings,  
you walk with us all of our days,  
and nothing in life or death or all creation  
can separate us from your love in Jesus Christ.

Thank you that you forgive us our faults and mistakes,  
share with us in our worries and struggles,  
and lead us onwards into fullness of life.

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus.

**Amen**

## An Evening Hymn

Before the ending of the day,  
Creator of the world, we pray  
That with thy wonted favour thou  
Wouldst be our guard and keeper now.

From all ill dreams defend our eyes  
From nightly fears and fantasies;  
Tread underfoot our ghostly foe  
That no pollution we may know.

O Father, that we ask be done  
Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son  
Who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,  
doth live and reign eternally. Amen

## Psalm of the Day – Psalm 71:1 – 14

*At the end of the psalm, the following is said:*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
**as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever.**  
**Amen**

**Reading** Luke 21:1 – 8

### Reflection

Today's focus shifts from Jesus engaging in debate with others from within the lively Judaism of his day, to conversation with his friends, as they spent time up in Jerusalem and its Temple immediately prior to the Festival of Passover. The contrast between the humility of the widow putting her copper coins into its treasury and the grandeur of its outer edifice as reconstructed by Herod is more than a little stark. Jesus praises the former for her generosity in giving the last of what she has, whilst cautioning the disciples against getting carried away with architectural wonders or with the emergence of false messiahs. Both the latter were distractions from the kingdom that was breaking in through Jesus' very person. Just as the Jerusalem establishment needed to wake up to what God was doing and then change course, so those bent upon violent rebellion and proclaiming themselves the saviour of Israel needed to turn round, and embrace a different path. By contrast, the widow's generosity was one example of the upside-down dynamics of the Kingdom, in which the last will be first. When she gave all she had, the widow made a free choice to do so, as we know that those living in poverty were not required to contribute anything into the Temple treasury, and her agency is important.

One temptation that plagues our middle-class church culture is that of assuming we have all the answers and none of the vulnerabilities,

so that when we work with those who find themselves existing upon the margins of society, we picture ourselves as fixing or saving them rather than as building mutually interdependent relationships. There is a tendency to regard the poorest as objects of pity and that readily leads to being denied a chance to exercise any meaningful agency. We may not think the widow made a wise decision when she placed her two small coins into the Temple treasury, but it nonetheless was her choice to do so, and Jesus recognises how her contribution was greater than those who put in much larger amounts, but still had lots to spare afterwards.

Coming to this passage, as we do, in a context of growing inequality and deepening poverty, it poses two particular challenges. Firstly, it brings into the light that magpie-like aspect of human nature that all too easily gets drawn to the shiny new things of the world, and away from walking the path of the cross. Secondly, it calls for examination of our motives and practice as we seek to engage with the needs in the wider community. To acknowledge that temptation to 'fix' others is not to step back altogether from addressing the consequences of Brexit, a global pandemic and ideologically chosen poverty. Yet, we do need to commit ourselves to genuinely reflective practice, so that we might keep that temptation in check. In Holy Week, the delusions of self-sufficiency and suburban sortedness are unmasked for what they really are. We are confronted with the vulnerability we normally hide and deny, and so are brought to the foot of the cross in humility. The widow's generosity was an acknowledgement of her own need, in that she willingly gave the last she had for something greater than herself. Will we find ourselves able to do so when the crunch comes, and so honour the human dignity of others?

## Responding to the Word

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

**Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

**I commend my spirit.**

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

Keep me as the apple of your eye.

**Hide me under the shadow of your wings.**

## Canticle – The Song of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis)

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:  
your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;  
A light to reveal you to the nations  
and the glory of your people Israel.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever.**

**Amen**

## Prayers of Intercession

*The following prayer may be offered at the end of the intercessions:*

Almighty God,  
as we stand at the foot of the cross of your Son,  
help us to see and know your love for us,  
so that in humility, love and joy, we may place at his feet  
all that we have and all that we are;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**Amen**

## The Lord's Prayer

### A Prayer of Journeying On

As you journey onwards in God's love,  
towards the foot of the cross of Christ,  
may you step forward boldly and act justly,  
so that through you, all may know that they matter.  
And the blessing of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you, and all whom you love and pray for,  
now and for ever. **Amen**