

Intercessions 5 January 2020

Readings Isaiah 60. 1-6 Gospel: Matthew 2. 1-12

Collect Creator of the heavens, who led the magi by a star to worship the Christ-child: guide and sustain us, that we may find our journey's end in Jesus Christ our Lord.

[The words in italics are adapted from: David L. Bartlett, Barbara Brown Taylor & Kimberly Bracken Long. Feasting on the Word Advent Companion: A Thematic Resource for Preaching and Worship (p. 125). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition. Quoted in a prayer for peace on Christmas Day prepared by the Sojourners organisation in Washington DC, December 2019]

The response today to 'Hear us, O God' is: **your mercy is great**

Let us pray for the world in which the Prince of Peace took flesh and form.

We give you thanks, Holy One, for the light that has come into the darkness of our world, for the truth illuminated, for the pathway that has opened, for the rejoicing of your people.

We give you thanks for the feet of those who bring good news, friendship, comfort, food, shelter, and medicine for healing.

We give you thanks for the church of Christ Jesus and for all people of faith whose attention to the way of peace tears down walls that keep us apart.

As the Archbishop of Canterbury has encouraged this week, may we use our personal connections and make new connections in 2020 to help create a new unity in a divided society. As we follow the example of Jesus who took the risk of connecting with people who were separated from him, may people come to understand the Jesus story and enter the kingdom.

Hear us, O God - **your mercy is great**

We give you thanks for this country and for every nation where wisdom reigns, where leaders work for the well-being of the poor, so that no one is hungry or homeless, and every child is valued and nourished.

We remember countries where this does not appear to be the case, in particular:

Yemen - widely seen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, where conflict has left 24 million people in need of urgent help.

Venezuela - where political and economic turmoil has led to a mass exodus of people into countries including Colombia and Brazil.

South Sudan - despite a hopeful-looking peace agreement in late 2018, pockets of conflict persist, and millions have fled their homes.

Burkina Faso - where churches have been attacked and many schools have been forced to close because of violent clashes between armed groups.

Lord, we are concerned in this country about what the bishop of Liverpool (Paul Bayes) has referred to as a “time of untruth”, about which he wrote this week:

“I do not only mean by this that our political leaders lie to us. They do, but this is not the worst of it. Worse than lying is the shamelessness that sees no sin in lying, that knows there will be no penalty to being caught lying, that pays no penalty, that systematically devalues truth in the pursuit of popular power.”

Lord, we are conscious of the danger of christian self-righteousness and acknowledge the faults in our own broken communities. We join with the Catholic archbishop of Westminster (Cardinal Vincent Nichols) in praying that the new UK government will “strive both to create opportunities and respond to those most in need in effective and lasting ways” and that businesses and financial institutions would act to strengthen “bonds with and within the societies in which they operate”.

Lord, we fear that the American assassination this week of Iran’s second most powerful national leader (General Qasem Soleimani) will be responded to as an act of war, with potentially catastrophic consequences for human lives in the Middle East and possibly around the world. Help us to be peacemakers and not merely peace lovers, and to actively oppose and de-escalate violence wherever we can.

May your Spirit of peace be in the hearts of all people, so that conflicts end with peace, and relationships are restored.

Hear us, O God - **your mercy is great**

We pray for the knowledge and courage to be good stewards of all that you have given us: ourselves, our neighbours, the strangers among us, the oceans and rivers, the air and soil, creatures large and small, that we may continue to be blessed with health and life.

God as this new year dawns,
Let us not be blinded by the world’s darkness.
Or consumed by paralyzing fear.
Let us remember,
From darkness you bring forth light,
Out of winter’s death you give birth to life.
Let us remember,
That which is dormant will spring to life,
That which is pruned will spout new strength.

Let us remember,
You are the light that gives us sight,
You are the breath that gives us life,
You are the water that quenches thirst.

(First part of Christine Sine's New Year prayer <https://godspacelight.com/2014/12/31/a-prayer-for-new-year-2015/>)

Lord God, You made the world and declared it was 'very good.' And yet, we have not treated the Earth and our fellow humans with the care and respect they deserve. We are sorry and ask for your forgiveness.

In 2020, give all of us the courage to keep raising our voices about the climate emergency, which affects people living in poverty the worst.

Hear us, O God - **your mercy is great**

We pray for those whose flesh is harmed by poverty, sickness, and cruelty of any kind, that the Word-made-flesh may so fill your world with the power to heal that all people would be made strong and whole.

We bring before the Lord:

We remember those who have died and those that mourn their passing:

We remember the anniversaries of:

The psalmist wrote: 'The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.' (Psalm 19: 7a)

The Lord restores our souls. Let words of the Lord restore us. We thank our Father who knows that His children would need to be restored. He restores our health: He heals us of our wounds. He will restore comfort to us. He will restore to us the joy of His salvation. He will renew a right a spirit within us. He will not cast us away from His Presence.

[Adapted from: Amy Carmichael. Northumbria Community.]

Hear us, O God - **your mercy is great**

We commend all these things to you and offer our thanksgiving, trusting that what we have left unsaid, your holy wisdom can unearth; in the name of the One who came among us in the power of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Merciful Father.....**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

Amen