



**Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;  
break forth, O mountains, into singing!  
For the Lord has comforted his people  
and will have compassion on his afflicted.**

**Isaiah 49:13**

Friends, we are still the people of God and we are never forgotten. The truth is that our God loves and lives with all creation, weeping within our sorrows and laughing with us in joy when life lifts us in hope. And so do not choose to travel alone or feel bereft in this challenging time – a gentle God is yearning to meet with us – to gather us in his embrace, ready to hold us firm when we fall.

***We wait to hear your voice, O God.***

***Be among us in this hour, be real to us even in our separateness,  
even when our faith is small and challenged by life's complexity.***

Come, Holy Parent and eternal friend. O God of all eternity, invite us now towards your abundant life and the power of your presence and guide us as we journey together.

***We wait to hear your voice, O God.***

***Be among us in this hour, be real to us even in our separateness,  
even when our faith is small and challenged by life's complexity.***

**Hymn 276**     *There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring  
when our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King  
weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long,  
but his triumph day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.*

*There's a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air,  
and the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer:  
for the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne,  
and the travail of our spirit is the travail of his own.*

*He is breaking down the barriers, he is casting up the way,  
he is calling for his angels to build up the gates of day:  
but his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above;  
for the drum-beats of his army are the heart-beats of our love.*

*Hark, we hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell–  
the great triumph song of Jesus, of our King, Immanuel:  
Zion, go you forth to meet him; and, my soul, be swift to bring  
all your finest and your dearest for the triumph of our King!*

### **Confession**

God of understanding and comfort, you know and understand when we are unable to see a way ahead, but we find it hard to believe you are still with us in such challenging times as these. As we look trouble in the face and cannot imagine what to do next for we feel so bereft and alone, speak to us through our struggles and fears and doubts.

***Touch us kindly with your grace and love when our faith runs low and we are tempted to  
turn our backs on you in our despair.***

We look around us and see a world so overcome by need and so lacking in empathy and concern for others, resorting to violence and exploitation and oppression to solve its problems, abandoning the vulnerable and most needy. We find it hard to turn to the truths of the Gospel as the way forward and see being your faithful people as not the path for meaningful change let alone the path of grace and love. Speak to us once again through our struggles and fears.

***Touch us kindly with your grace and love when our faith runs low and we are tempted to turn our backs on you in our despair.***

There is no place remote from the God of grace and love, no time when God is not near, no emptiness which God will not embrace and fill with his compassion. Know, then, the presence and fullness of God's grace.

***Thanks be to God.***

We give thanks to you, O God for the assurances which come to us from ages past, the clarion voice in the darkest of times which was the voice of your love.

***We continue to hear your word resounding in our generation as in the faithful generations of time immemorial ; and, with grateful hearts, we will receive it to renew our hope in our day and every day ahead.***

***Thanks be to you, O God.***

***Amen***

**Hymn 260**

*He walked on earth showing glimpses of heaven;  
demons, death, disease had no hand.*

*The wind and the waves were obedient before him:  
well may they say, Who is this man?*

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin,  
the light of the world, the Son of God.*

*Worthy is the Lamb to receive our praise  
and glory and honour and power.*

*He turned not his face from our pain and destruction,  
he drank the bitter cup to the end;  
he who knew no sin took the punishment for us,  
deserted by God, man and friend.*

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin,  
the light of the world, the Son of God.*

*Worthy is the Lamb to receive our praise  
and glory and honour and power.*

*On the third day he was raised up with glory,  
reigning on high, the risen Son:  
we have new life, a new hope, a new future;  
now we cry, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come!'*

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin,  
the light of the world, the Son of God.*

*Worthy is the Lamb to receive our praise  
and glory and honour and power.*

## **Gospel Matthew 6:25-34**

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

***Thanks be to God for the Gospel.***

### **Hymn 745**

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be added unto you. Allelu, alleluia.  
Refrain: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia.*

*Ask and it shall be given unto you,  
seek and you shall find,  
knock and it shall be opened unto you. Allelu, alleluia.  
Refrain: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia.*

*We shall not live by bread alone,  
but by every word  
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Allelu, alleluia.  
Refrain: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia.*

### **Reflection**

Today's Gospel passage is, surely, one of the summaries of our faith and very rightly celebrated in the hymn with which we led into this reflection. It is a passage reminding us that what people of faith are about is placing absolute trust in God because this is what the life and teaching and death of Jesus was all about. God is a God of grace and love who cares about every single person, every single aspect of His Creation and is always there for us, no matter what. So we are invited not to worry about tomorrow and when we are able to do that, it is always an act of faith in the God who cares. And this is not a God who saves us from all trouble, pain and trial. It is one who speaks through all these things, all such human realities, and wants to remind us that we are never forgotten. It is one who invites, more, challenges us to live in the absolute surety that all things are possible through love and grace and compassion and courage; for the healing of our God waits for us within every moment of our lives if we remain open to receive it. This is what being God's faithful people is all about.

## **Prayers for ourselves and Others**

O God whom we know first and last in Jesus Christ, as we enter the desserts and wildernesses of our troubled times, we continue to need your word of assurance. It is so hard when we ourselves are embattled and threatened that we can be part of the effective bringing in of change and making life new. In the face of the global forces at work about us our hearts cry out as did the faithful of old, "Where is our God?". We do not even know much of what lies in the shadows of the injustice, need and fear that is the lot of so many about us. Indeed often we dare not look in case we are faced with the pain and despair beyond our capacity for any sort of meaningful action. We try to make a difference in our small ways and then find faith hard to sustain and swallowed up by the endless challenges that seem always to be confronting us.

***Imprint your words of encouragement into our souls, O God. Join us with all who are struggling for good and for the survival of true human community, all who down the centuries have practised faith without, against all the odds, so that where our lives hold within them pain, grief or fear for the future and anxieties hard to share, the ongoing reality of the Holy Spirit continues to enliven us with the fire of your eternal commitment to us.***

So may the words of the prophet of old have life again in our mouths

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**Isaiah 49:13**

## **Lord's Prayer**

In confidence we pray as Jesus taught us

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.*

*Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.*

*For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.*

*Amen*

## **Benediction**

May the Holy Word of God sound within us  
the company of Christ the Lord continue to embrace us  
and the comfort of the Holy Spirit surround us and all whom we love  
as we walk the path of life.

**Reverend Graeme Kerr**