



### Prayers & Readings for this week

- ▶ We remember John B who is awaiting a consultation following recent scans, Jon F and his continued treatment at Christies, Albert & Jean and Mike's nephew, Russell amongst many others.
- ▶ We pray for many trying to get back to work and children possibly go back to school, we pray safety for all
- ▶ We pray for all the churches who risen to the present challenge to offer weekly ministry to their regular attendees and communities
- ▶ We pray for scientists to be successful in finding a vaccine
- ▶ We pray for our NHS workers to be kept safe

**Monday** Reading John 6:22–59  
Pray for Josh, Molly, Miley-Rose, Jonah & Ezra  
Jenkinson

**Tuesday** Reading John 6:60–71  
Pray for Isobel Cave & family

**Wednesday** Reading John 7:1–24  
Pray for Christine Clarke

**Thursday** Reading John 7:25–52  
Pray for Enid & James Collins & family

**Friday** Reading John 7:53–8:30  
Pray for Luis, Miriam & family

**Saturday** Reading: Catch up  
Pray for Heather Critchley

**Sunday 31 May** Reading John 8:31–59  
Pray for Elouise Critchley

The summer is almost officially upon us. The seasons remind us of an aspect of nature that is very much instilled in our humanity; we are creatures of habit. Just as there are seasons of the year that come around with unbending regularity, so also there is a very important place in our lives for routine. I hasten to add, at this point, that our discipline in meeting together in 'the Lord's Day' is a habit that is worth every minute of our gathering - even online!

We sometimes hear people say that they feel 'out of sync' or 'thrown' when our comfort zone of habits are interrupted. Now there are good habits and bad ones; I am referring to good, wholesome things that we with regularity occupy our minds and desires. The apostle urged his readers, **'brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.'** (Phil 4: 8)

We commend such activities to the whole church. We believe that if we fill our minds with good things, good results will follow. If you are one of those 'creatures of habit', then that can be a wonderful identifiable feature of your life. These good things start in our early years and are so valuable throughout our lives. Usually when we remember a friend or family member we remember those very things; the way they did certain things, how they always 'did it that way'.

And as we read the gospels we find some of these lovely ways in the life of Jesus Christ or even the apostles. I am not suggesting that we merely try to copy others but to be yourself, unique and loved by God and how that very fact can be enough to make you a very special person in our church and community. There is a special kind of person the Lord needs today just as he has in past generations. We need people to *'stand in the gap'*. It's from Ezekiel where he talks about the right person at the right time. It is true that for every generation God calls a unique person to do the right things at the right time. Such people are molded from their early years - one main biblical example of that was Moses. He stood in the gap for his nation in great time of peril.

We trust the Lord to provide in every way for us as individuals, families, church and as a nation in times of challenge and crisis. May the Spirit of the living God be very real to use these days. ***Grace and peace to all!***



**Message:** 'Here's looking towards Heaven' Readings: John 17: 1- 11; 1 Peter 5: 6-11

**INTRO:** As you know we always include prayers in our services. We have both Opening and Pastoral prayer and sometimes we say together The Lord's Prayer, not forgetting a few congregational prayers. Now there is a thing – the Lord's Prayers – how many recorded prayers of Jesus do we have in the Bible; very few actually. The ones we do have include the Prayer Jesus taught his disciples, the prayer recorded in Matthew 11 where Jesus prays for those feeling **weary**, which includes the words, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'.

You also have the prayer of Jesus standing at the tomb of Lazarus where he, 'looked up' and thanked his father saying, 'I knew that you always hear me...' And I think that alongside his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and a couple of one sentence prayers from the Cross – that is it. John chapter 17 is, one could argue, a series of prayers and his most extensive collection all in one place. I love the way it all starts – 'He looked towards heaven and prayed'. (John 17: 1)

So this morning then, '**Here's looking towards Heaven**' together! We look up so that we might see everything else around us in a better light. I have to say though, it was...

### 1. A Defining Moment!

Something significant had just been declared. Here it is in verse 1. "After Jesus said this, he looked towards heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." (John 17:1)

We use the phrase, '**It's Time**' about lots of insignificant things; its 9.45am, I am in my study and I think to myself, 'it's time for **a coffee**'. Up until coronavirus came along, at 9.20 am every Sunday morning, I would say to Ingrid, 'It's time to **go to church!** It was the cue to make sure we had everything we needed at the front door. Then about 10.30pm every evening, without much of an announcement we turn off the lights and head upstairs because... it's **time for bed!** None of those are defining moments, **but this one was...!** Within a number of hours and days the answer to this prayer would ultimately mean Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and Resurrection! It was a series of events that would culminate in an event that many recalled last week; Thursday to be precise, when we recall the anniversary of Christ's **Ascension** to Glory. That is what Jesus refers to in verse 5... "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." (John 17:5)

This defining moment encapsulates everything that Jesus did for us. God's only begotten Son gave up his splendour for the 33 years he lived here so that we might believe – **and in believing**, that our name might be written down in Glory!

**When we place our trust in Christ** our name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life; a record kept in heaven's glory.

But this does not mean we can forget about what goes on around us. Jesus, if you remember conducted a ministry that **helped**, **healed** and **held** peoples' hopes together. In fact, the little things Jesus did for so many people have become huge things – who could ever forget that Jesus *touched* a Leper! This is compassionate ministry, even today. There is a song the band had in mind to learn before lockdown came along. The line of the chorus says, 'There's a new name written down in glory – **and it's mine!** I've met the author of my story, and He's mine, **yes He's mine!**

### 2. Our Personal Prayer

It was the Father's delight to answer the prayer of His One and only Son. In a sense, it should become as personal to us as the Lord's *Prayer is*. When I first read this passage in preparation for this morning, I lingered a little longer at Jesus' prayer in verse 3 where it says, "*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*" (John 17:3) The reason I lingered and re-read it a few times was because *it didn't seem to sit right*. If I had said this prayer I feel sure I would have said it like this... "*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and **Me**, whom you have sent.*" (John 17:3) Instead, it is couched differently. The wisdom of a certain commentator helped me a great deal. **N.T. Wright said of this**, 'it is John – the writer – making this prayer of Jesus' *his very own*. John turns phrases round so that they become (so to speak) pray-able by the Christian community.' I believe that Jesus is very interested in our well-being here and now. Much of Jesus ministry and miracles which he performed was about **the immediate needs of people**, compassion for the outcasts of society, and giving all people dignity etc. **While not neglecting** these important aspects of **ministry** (and should I also say, **of our humanity**), Jesus ultimate focus was revealed in this prayer. In this *Defining Moment* upon which we are focused; in this *Personal Prayer* that must become ours, we see that **this eternal weight of glory** stands on its own – **incomparable with anything else...**

Bereft of stewardship, many people invest everything they have in a temporal domain so they can be king for a day, even if the day might turn out to be 20 years or more; but come to an end it must, and then who will get it? **The spirit of this prayer of Jesus is** humility **and - it is key to life**. Our second reading from Peter has these wise words: "clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." (1 Peter 5: 5-6)

Peter goes on to offer this timely advice for today, 'Cast all your anxiety on him because **he cares for you.**' In humility – and what an example of humility it was – Jesus placed every aspect of his ministry and manner in the Hands of the Father seated in Glory. Friends the time has come; ten weeks into lock-down **we must always look up!** **'Til we cast our crowns before Thee, Lost in wonder, love, and praise.** (C Wesley). Blessings to all!