

**Psalm 78 1-4**

My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth.  
I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old— things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us.  
We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.

**Prayer**

Loving Lord, we come before you knowing that as we pray, others pray with us. Fill our hearts with the remembrance of those we have not seen, assured that they remain in your loving care. We praise you for who you are – our Lord, our Saviour and God. Awake in us that bond that unites us with you. Fill us with your love and grace that we may know you, know your presence with us every day. Be our rock in uncertainty, our constant when all around us is shaken. Let us praise you in our words and actions, in our thoughts be our guide. Help us to remember that you are our God and your hand is upon us all. You are our God, and we love you.  
Amen.

**Prayer of confession**

Loving Lord, in our lives we do things that are against your Word and not have not followed Jesus Christ's example. We have let unkind thoughts into our minds and not been as Jesus to others. Help us to find our way back to you and open us to the love we ask for in our humility and repentance. We ask forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the hope and glory of his resurrection. For it is in his name we pray.  
Amen.

**Hymn 504 Stf**

1. May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,  
Live in me from day to day,  
By His love and power controlling  
All I do and say.
2. May the Word of God dwell richly  
In my heart from hour to hour,  
So that all may see I triumph  
Only through His power.
3. May the peace of God my Father  
Rule my life in everything,  
That I may be calm to comfort  
Sick and sorrowing
4. May the love of Jesus fill me  
As the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self abasing,  
This is victory.
5. May I run the race before me,  
Strong and brave to face the foe,  
Looking only unto Jesus  
As I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson

## Philippians 2: 1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was<sup>[a]</sup> in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

### Hymn 611

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| 1. Brother, sister, let me serve you;<br>let me be as Christ to you;<br>pray that I may have the grace<br>to let you be my servant too.            | 2. We are pilgrims on a journey,<br>and companions on the road;<br>we are here to help each other<br>walk the mile and bear the load                      |
| 3. I will hold the Christ-light for you<br>in the night-time of your fear;<br>I will hold my hand out to you,<br>speak the peace you long to hear. | 4. I will weep when you are weeping;<br>when you laugh I'll laugh with you;<br>I will share your joy and sorrow,<br>till we've seen this journey through. |
| 5. When we sing to God in heaven,<br>we shall find such harmony,<br>born of all we've known together<br>of Christ's love and agony.                | 6. Brother, sister, let me serve you;<br>let me be as Christ to you;<br>pray that may have the grace to<br>let you be my servant too.                     |

Richard A M Gillard

### Sermon

Paul is writing to the Philippians from prison. He is not able to be with them in person, but wants to encourage them – to keep their goal in focus and keep on track. And he does it with, not only the sense of purpose, but also in hope and love. We see time and again Paul's love for the early Philippian Christians shine through in this letter. He begins this section with a series of criteria – if there is any encouragement from Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy then the joy follows. We are in a state of uncertainty and perhaps we need a letter of encouragement from Paul to show us how we can cope and move forward in Christ. Paul shows how the Godhead emptied himself to be completely humble to give and to receive. It is hard to follow Jesus's example on our own. We need to give and receive encouragement to and from others in order to maintain our commitment and discipleship effectively. Our encouragement from Christ comes from prayer, reading the Bible, worship and praise. Consolation from love has been a huge blessing for so many people over the last six months. We have seen such incredible acts of humility where people have put others ahead of themselves. Care-home staff have missed loved ones to stay with those in their care. Doctors, nurses, ambulance staff have done double shifts to help cope with the over-capacity of patients. Sharing in the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit have been more difficult. Joy, peace and patience have probably been in short supply, whereas kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness have been in abundance. And finally, compassion and sympathy – we have been through testing times and I think we have all discovered great compassion and sympathy.

For ourselves, have we become more selfish? Have we become over critical of what others are doing or not doing? Do we find the government an easy target in these times? We are probably very glad we aren't making the decisions, just following the rules that ensue. Paul reminds us not to set our needs above the needs of others, or ourselves above others. In all humility we are told to reset ourselves as Christ, to empty ourselves and become the conduits through which God can work.

I come back to prayer. God works through us when we listen to him. He can't work in us when we are in a state of resistance through neglect or our own wilfulness. We need that communication with him to ensure that his will is done. It's no good us praying 'Thy will be done' if we aren't in a position to ensure it happens. We have to empty ourselves so that God can fill us with his love and purpose. We need to open our hearts to the encouragement Christ has to offer, to give and receive the consolation of love, share the fruits of the Spirit and show compassion and sympathy where people are in need.

Let us be of one mind in Christ and individually and collectively as the body of Christ effect God's work in us for his Kingdom.

Amen.

### **Prayer**

Please in the quiet, bring before God the prayers he has put upon your heart.

We bring before you all those who need you today, whether they know it or not. We pray for all those whose lives have been thrown into disarray in the current circumstances. People who face an uncertain future through unemployment, financial worries, the breakdown of trust, disassociation from others. We pray for broken lives. God, give encouragement to all who need it. Help us to help others in their time of need and by our actions bring the good news that is Jesus Christ to those who need to hear.

Amen

**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 for ever. Amen.**

### **Hymn 418**

We have a gospel to proclaim,  
Good news for men in all the earth;  
The gospel of a Saviour's name,  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

Tell of His birth at Bethlehem,  
Not in a royal house or hall  
But in a stable dark and dim,  
The Word made flesh, a light for all

Tell of His death at Calvary,  
Hated by those He came to save,  
In lonely suffering on the cross,  
For all He loved His life He gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn,  
Empty the tomb, for He was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
That we might share His victory.

Tell of His reign at God's right hand,  
By all creation glorified,  
He sends His Spirit on His Church,  
To live for Him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name Him King,  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth,  
This gospel message we proclaim,  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

### **Blessing**

May God who gave us life enrich our lives as we go into the coming week and future. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.