

**Lectionary Readings:** Exodus 12: 21-27  
 Psalm 119: (1-8) 9-16  
 Matthew 4:23 – 5:20

Who can fathom the thinking of the Lectionary compilers? A few weeks ago there were five readings listed – a passage from the Old Testament together with an alternative from the Apocrypha; a reading from Psalms; a New Testament reading from a book other than a Gospel and finally a reading from one of the four Gospels.

This week, in contrast, there are only three readings – one from Exodus, one from Psalms and one from a Gospel!

The reading last week, from Exodus chapters 4 and 5, concluded with Moses and Aaron confronting Pharaoh for the first time. When Moses had been called to return to Egypt – the ‘Burning Bush’ – the Lord warned him that persuading Pharaoh to “Let His people go” would not be an easy job: (Exodus 3)

- <sup>16</sup> ‘Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, “The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.  
<sup>17</sup> And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites – a land flowing with milk and honey.”  
<sup>18</sup> ‘The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.”  
<sup>19</sup> **But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.**  
<sup>20</sup> **So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.**

After that first meeting of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh, the latter issues instructions that no straw is to be **given** to the Hebrew slaves, in future they will have to cut and collect their own straw – while maintaining the same output of bricks. The Israelite foremen appeal to Pharaoh and are accused of being lazy – they then turn on Moses and Aaron. Moses returns to the Lord: (Exodus 5:22-6:1)

**God promises deliverance**

- <sup>22</sup> Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me?  
<sup>23</sup> Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.’  
<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.’

At this point in Exodus we appear to have a compilation from two original sources as we read again of Moses telling the Lord of his faltering speech and the appointment of Aaron to go with him.

In Exodus 7 (verse 10) Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh again and perform the staff to snake ‘miracle’ when demanded by the king. As his wise men and sorcerers were able to do the same thing Pharaoh’s heart was hardened further “*just as the Lord had said*”. (verse 13)

The next encounter was on the banks of the Nile which turned to blood when struck with Aaron’s staff. Once again, we read, the wise men and sorcerers were able to do the same and “*Pharaoh’s heart became hard*”.

Seven days later we start the series of ‘plagues’ – first a plague of frogs (once again countered by the wise men and sorcerers). We see the slightest signs of relent in Pharaoh’s attitude when he summons Moses and Aaron (but it is short lived): (Exodus 8)

- <sup>8</sup> Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.’  
<sup>9</sup> Moses said to Pharaoh, ‘I leave to you the honour of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.’  
<sup>10</sup> ‘Tomorrow,’ Pharaoh said.  
 Moses replied, ‘It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God.  
<sup>11</sup> The frogs will leave you and your houses, your officials and your people; they will remain only in the Nile.’  
<sup>12</sup> After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the LORD about the frogs he had brought on Pharaoh.  
<sup>13</sup> And the LORD did what Moses asked. The frogs died in the houses, in the courtyards and in the fields.  
<sup>14</sup> They were piled into heaps, and the land reeked of them.  
<sup>15</sup> **But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.**

In a similar way there follow the plague of flies; the plague on livestock; the plague of boils; the plague of hail and the plague of locusts: (Exodus 10: 1-7)

### The plague of locusts

- <sup>1</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these signs of mine among them <sup>2</sup> that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD.'
- <sup>3</sup> So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow. They will cover the face of the ground so that it cannot be seen. They will devour what little you have left after the hail, including every tree that is growing in your fields. They will fill your houses and those of all your officials and all the Egyptians – something neither your parents nor your ancestors have ever seen from the day they settled in this land till now.'" Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh.
- <sup>7</sup> Pharaoh's officials said to him, 'How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Do you not yet realise that Egypt is ruined?'

Once again Pharaoh is contrite with the plague of locusts in his land – he says to Moses and Aaron *"I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you. Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the Lord your God to take this deadly plague away from me"*.

We can guess what happens – the locusts are blown away and Pharaoh hardens his heart once again.

There are only two more plagues to go – that of darkness and finally the plague on the firstborn: (Exodus 11)

### The plague on the firstborn

- <sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Moses, 'I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely.'
- <sup>2</sup> Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbours for articles of silver and gold.'
- <sup>3</sup> (The LORD made the Egyptians favourably disposed towards the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.)
- <sup>4</sup> So Moses said, 'This is what the LORD says: "About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt – worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal." Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, "Go, you and all the people who follow you!" After that I will leave.' Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.
- <sup>9</sup> **The LORD had said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you – so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.'**
- <sup>10</sup> **Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.**

At the end of chapter 11 Pharaoh has been warned of the coming disaster for the firstborn in all Egyptian families. Our reading today comes in the later part of chapter 12 – the Israelites are given instructions for that actual night of "Passover", the indication that a house contains God's people. There is also an element of looking forward to an annual remembrance of that night (v.25) – *"When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony"*.

The first 20 verses of chapter 12, the instructions for "Passover" preparation and for celebrating the Lord bringing his people out of Egypt are given in more detail:

### The Passover

- <sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, <sup>2</sup> 'This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.'
- <sup>3</sup> Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb<sup>a</sup> for his family, one for each household.
- <sup>4</sup> If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbour, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.
- <sup>5</sup> The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.
- <sup>6</sup> Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.
- <sup>7</sup> Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door-frames of the houses where they eat the lambs.
- <sup>8</sup> That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.
- <sup>9</sup> Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire – with the head, legs and internal organs.
- <sup>10</sup> Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it.
- <sup>11</sup> This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.
- <sup>12</sup> 'On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.
- <sup>13</sup> The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

- <sup>14</sup> 'This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD – a lasting ordinance.
- <sup>15</sup> For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day until the seventh must be cut off from Israel.
- <sup>16</sup> On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day.  
Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat; that is all you may do.
- <sup>17</sup> 'Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.
- <sup>18</sup> In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day.
- <sup>19</sup> For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel.
- <sup>20</sup> Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.'

**Footnotes**

- a. [Exodus 12:3](#) The Hebrew word can mean *lamb* or *kid*; also in verse 4.

In these instructions we can clearly see preparation for the sudden departure and for the great journey the people are about to commence – roasting ‘just enough’ lamb to be consumed at that evening meal, eating it while dressed for the journey, eating ‘unleavened’ bread for seven days from the night of the “Passover” – it would last better on the journey.

The final instruction – given to the Israelites by Moses, in our reading – is to make certain that the nation’s children understand the significance of the “Festival of Unleavened Bread”:

- <sup>26</sup> And when your children ask you, “What does this ceremony mean to you?”  
<sup>27</sup> then tell them, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.” Then the people bowed down and worshipped.

We remember our own link with this story of ‘deliverance’ for the people of Israel. Jesus and his disciples had celebrated the “Passover” meal before going out to the Garden of Gethsemane and the arrest of Jesus. At the meal He had of course taken bread and likened it to His body; taken wine and likened it to His blood. Because of the timing of these events there is often reference to Him as the “Paschal Lamb”. There is significance in linking these two events – God’s one time deliverance of His people and His subsequent gift of salvation in Jesus.

<p>Paschal Lamb, by God appointed All our sins on thee were laid: By almighty love anointed, Thou hast full atonement made.</p> <p>Adam's sons are now forgiven, Through the virtue of thy blood! Open'd is the gate of heaven-- Peace is made 'twixt man and God</p> <p>Jesus, hail, enthrond'd in glory, There for ever to abide; All the heavenly hosts adore thee, Seated at thy Father's side.</p>	<p>There for sinners thou art pleading-- There thou dost our place prepare; Ever for us interceding, Till in glory we appear.</p> <p>Glory, honour, pow'r, and blessing, Thou art worthy to receive; Loudest praises, without ceasing, Meet it is for us to give.</p> <p>When we join th' angelic spirits, In their sweetest, noblest lays, We will sing our Saviour's merits-- Gladly chant Immanuel's praise.</p>
---	---

John Bakewell

John Bakewell was born at Brailsford, Derbyshire in 1721. At about the age of eighteen his mind was turned towards religious truths by reading Boston's Fourfold State. From that date he became an ardent evangelist, and in 1744 (the year of the first Methodist Conference) he began to preach. Removing to London some short time after, he became acquainted with the Wesleys, M. Madan, A. M. Toplady, J. Fletcher, and other earnest evangelical men. After conducting for some years the Greenwich Royal Park Academy, he resigned in favour of his son-in-law, Dr. James Egan, and employed much of his time in preaching at various places for the Wesleyans. He died at Lewisham, near Greenwich, March 18, 1819, aged 98, and was buried at City Road near the grave of John Wesley. His tombstone at City Road says, ‘He adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour eighty years, and preached His glorious Gospel about seventy years.

(Biographical notes from Hymnary.org and Telford – Methodist Hymn Book Illustrated in History and Experience)

Only one of his hymns (“Hail, thou once despised Jesus”) has found its way into the MHB, H&P and STF.

The psalm for this week returns once again to Psalm 119. Comment has been previously made about the structure of the psalm which is described as an acrostic poem, the stanzas of which begin with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Moreover, we are told, the verses within each stanza begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet:

This week we read verses 9-16 (the second stanza **ב Beth**)  
and have the option of reading verses 1-8 (the first stanza **א Aleph**)

The NIV Study Bible tells us that verses 1-3 are a general introduction to the whole psalm:

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart –

<sup>3</sup> they do no wrong but follow his ways.

It goes on to say that “the Hebrew, translated as “ways” in verse 3 occurs rarely in the psalm, but is common in Deuteronomy and elsewhere as a general reference to God’s covenant requirements – it is used here to balance “ways” in verse 1”.

In the first stanza we note reference to the Lord’s (righteous) law(s), statutes, precepts, decrees and commands.

We find further reference to these in the second stanza.

From the NIV Bible Commentary:

The psalmist uses eight words for God’s law:

“Law” - (*torah*) In the broad sense it refers to any “instruction” flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life an action. In the narrow sense it denotes the Law of Moses.

“Word” - (*dabar*) is any word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. It is a general designation for divine revelation.

“Laws” - (*mishpatim*) pertain to particular legal issues (“case laws”) that form the basis of Israel’s legal system. God himself is the Great Judge.

“Statute(s)” - (*eduth/edoth*) derives from the word that means “witness”, “testify”; “testimony” is often synonymous with “covenant”. The observance of the “statutes” of the Lord signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant between God and Israel.

“Command(s)” - (*mitswah/mitswoth*) is a frequent designation for anything that the Lord, the covenant God, has ordered.

“Decrees” - (*huqqim*) is derived from the root for “engrave”, “inscribe”. God reveals his royal sovereignty by establishing his divine will in nature and in the covenant community.

“Precepts” - (*piqqudim*) occurs only in the book of Psalms and appears to be synonymous with “covenant” and with the revelation of God. Its root connotes the authority to determine the relationship between the speaker and the object.

“Word” or “Promise” - (*imrah*) may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised.

Was the author a young man? Verse 9 might give this impression but “more probably (NIV Study Bible) it indicates instruction addressed to the young after the manner of the wisdom teachers”.

In each of the stanzas we find a person earnestly seeking after the Lord – looking for those examples of the “Law” described above. There is, however – as we would expect, a truly Old Testament feel to these written words. The author is looking for evidence of divine revelation from history and other scriptural texts. There is a strong emphasis on the covenant relationship between God and His people – the demands placed on them by that relationship.

For us the emphasis must be that of finding and serving God under the “New Covenant” – established on that Passover weekend in Jerusalem so many years ago.

Matthew records, at the beginning of our Gospel passage, that “*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and illness among the people*”.

He goes on to say that His reputation spread all over Syria and more ‘sick’ people were brought to Him for healing.

As I read verse 24, and particularly verse 25, I can’t help wondering if Matthew is employing a degree of hyperbole?

<sup>24</sup> News about him spread **all over Syria**, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralysed; and he healed them.

<sup>25</sup> **Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.**



• Looking at a map of the area in these times shows a vast area – travel from one region to another would have taken a matter of days.

Syria is just marked – top left – it was in fact a large country that swept round the top of ‘Israel’ with its capital in Damascus.

The Decapolis – established by ‘Pompey the Great’ about 63BC - consisted of ten ‘independent’ city states (of Greek origin and culture), nine of which were east of the river Jordan.

The cities were Scythopolis (west of the Jordan), Hippos, Gadara, Pella, Philadelphia, Gerasa, Dion, Canatha, Damascus and Raphana.

Damascus was furthest to the north and Philadelphia furthest to the south.

From the map it will be seen that Jerusalem and Judea were well to the south of Galilee.

What region is Matthew referring to when he speaks of “the region across the Jordan”?

Much of this area could be attributed to the Decapolis, unless only the cities themselves came under that heading.

Hyperbole or not, Jesus certainly attracted large crowds for His preaching and teaching, His healing ministry, and for the other miracles He performed.

It was on such a day that Matthew recorded: (5:1)

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,

Was the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ delivered just to the disciples or to the disciples and the ‘crowds’? Reading the verse above (NIV) and most other translations the impression is that Jesus went up the mountainside to “escape” the crowds and to speak with His disciples – “sitting down” was the traditional mode of teaching.

One would have thought that if He was addressing a large crowd He would need to be on His feet.

Only the ‘Passion Translation’ (found in BibleGateway.com) offers an alternative picture(?):

<sup>1</sup> One day Jesus saw a vast crowd of people gathering to hear him, so he went up the slope of a hill and sat down.

**With his followers and disciples spread over the hillside,** <sup>2</sup> Jesus began to teach them:

The Passion Translation does offer an interesting footnote to the ‘Sermon on the Mount’:

It should be noted that Matt. 5–7, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, is the messianic Torah (law or teaching) and the Constitution of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus begins with giving his followers a superior way to live than the Ten Commandments of Moses. It is a superior version of all that God expects and provides for those who yield to him. Jesus gives us more than laws; he gives us promises of power to fulfil all that he asks of us.

The emphasis is not on outward duty but on the inward transformation of our hearts by grace.

God’s kingdom is offered to those who will learn the ways of Christ and offer themselves to him in full surrender.

Each of the ‘Beatitudes’ in Matthew begins with the word ‘Blessed’. The NIV Study Bible, commenting on this word says:

The word means more than “happy”, because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. “Blessed” here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.

In commenting further on “*poor in spirit*” it makes a contrast with the spiritually proud and self-sufficient. The kingdom is not something earned. It is more a gift than a recompense.

The meek inheriting the earth is a thought found in Psalm 37:11 and refers not so much to an attitude towards man as to a disposition before God, namely humility.

‘Meek’ is not a word in common usage today and the majority of people would certainly look down on Charles Wesley’s opening line to the hymn “Gentle Jesus meek and mild”.

The original hymn/poem apparently consisted of 14 verses divided into two sections of 7. The Methodist Hymn Book (842) prints 8 of these verses including the verse with the well known first line that is in question.

Hymns and Psalms (738) lists “Gentle Jesus meek and mild” in brackets in the index of first lines. It prints only 5 verses – numbers 13, 2, 9, 11 and 14 of the original; thus leaving out the “offending” verse 1.

The Hymn does not appear at all in Singing the Faith.

A commentator on the internet describes meekness in these terms:

**MEEKNESS. Someone has described this quality as power under control. In other words, the individual does not feel the need to keep proving himself, or seeking the acclaim of others. James speaks of “the meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13). And Paul exhorts the Colossian believers to “put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another” (Col. 3:12-13). The Lord Jesus also describes Himself as “gentle and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29; cf. Isa. 40:11). And Paul refers to “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (II Cor. 10:1). The adjective “mild is a little different since it’s not exactly a Bible word.**

The NIV study note on verse 8 comments that “*heart*” is the centre of one’s being, including mind, will and emotions; the centre from which spring those emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action – “the wellspring of life”: (Proverbs 4)

<sup>23</sup> Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

The first six of the ‘Beatitudes’ describe conditions and attitudes; the seventh – the peacemakers – describes not only an attitude but also an activity. Jesus then goes on to talk of those who are persecuted - in a general sense and then with specific reference to His listeners (and still relevant for us today):

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are **those** who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> **‘Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.**

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The passage then moves on to the description of Christians as Salt and Light. As a Chemistry teacher I remember being approached, one Sunday morning, with the question – “How can salt lose its saltiness?” We are so familiar with pure, white, crystalline salt that we forget the natural form. The crushed rock salt which is put on our roads in the winter is sometimes left in piles, ready for use, by the roadside. Have you ever noticed that after some time the pile gains a white ‘glistening’ coating? – Rain leaches the soluble salt out of the rock salt; the water evaporates leaving a coating of salt crystals. What is left after a period of time is useless ‘rock’ – good for nothing but to be thrown away. It can never regain the salt it has lost.

Jesus calls us salt of the earth – salt with its properties of preservation and the enhancing of flavour. Before I went to Uganda as a teacher on a short term contract I remember my father pessimistically telling me that I would have to take ‘salt tablets’ in that tropical climate. I never did take a tablet, but there was something related which I had not done before my departure and have not done since my return – the adding of salt to meals to enhance the flavour (presumably that was the way I acquired the salt I needed).

Salt is essential for life and Jesus calls us “**the salt of the earth**”. We refer again to “The Message” paraphrase:

<sup>13</sup> “Let me tell you why you are here. **You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness?**  
You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

What is your picture of a typical rural town or village? I suspect that the majority of you would picture the buildings nestling in the valley, possibly by a river or stream and surrounded by hills. I am always amused by Christmas cards showing the shepherds in the fields around Bethlehem – the flocks and their guardians are up on the hillsides overlooking the town. In reality ‘Bethlehem Fields’ are below the town for in common with most Middle Eastern practice Bethlehem is built on a hill. I remember the impression left when driving up to the town for the first time. It is one of those towns that cannot be hidden.

We are salt to the world – we are also light to the world. We are called to let our light shine out for all to see, a light that is truly based on our faith – so that our Father in heaven is given the honour and glory.

Jesus concludes this part of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ by stating that He has come to fulfil and build on the Old Testament Law and Prophets.

When we are told to let our light shine so that our good deeds may be seen and our Father in heaven glorified we are reminded of a comment already made on “*poor in spirit*”:

It makes a contrast with the spiritually proud and self-sufficient.

We remember the time when Jesus told a parable about contrasting prayers offered in the temple: (Luke 18)

<sup>9</sup> To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

<sup>10</sup> Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

<sup>13</sup> ‘But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

<sup>14</sup> ‘I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.

For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who **humble** themselves will be exalted.’

We are called to **humbly** be salt and light to the world: (Matthew 5)

<sup>20</sup> For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Darkness like a shroud covers the earth,  
Evil like a cloud covers the people.  
But the Lord will rise on you  
And His glory will appear on you,  
Nations will come to your light.

*Arise, shine, your light has come,  
The glory of the Lord has risen on you!  
Arise, shine, your light has come,  
Jesus the Light of the world has come.*

Children of the light, be clean and pure.  
Rise, you sleepers, Christ will shine on you.  
Take the Spirit’s flashing two edge sword  
And with faith declare God’s mighty word;  
Stand up and in His strength be strong.

Here among us now, Christ the Light  
Kindles brighter flames in our trembling hearts.  
Living Word, our lamp, come guide our feet  
As we walk as one in light and peace  
Till justice and truth shine like the sun.

Like a city bright so let us blaze;  
Lights in every street turning night to day.  
And the darkness shall not overcome  
Till the fullness of Christ’s kingdom comes,  
Dawning to God’s eternal day.

*Arise, shine, your light has come,  
The glory of the Lord has risen on you!  
Arise, shine, your light has come,  
Jesus the Light of the world,  
Jesus the Light of the world,  
Jesus the Light of the world has come.*

Graham Kendrick