



Martin Bird's Prayers for Monday 25th to Sunday 31st January 2021

Monday (The conversion of Paul)

Reading – Acts Chapter 9, verses 1 to 22

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord - Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here - has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

Lord Jesus, as we think about the conversion of Saul, it give us great hope for the world. It shows us that no one is beyond your help and nobody is unsavable. We pray today all people that we know, and those we don't, who are yet to know you as their Saviour, and pray that they might know your saving grace for themselves. We also pray that we who, at some point in our lives, have welcomed you into our hearts, would never stop being amazed and full of awe and wonder over what you do give to us all, and would never stop trying to get more and more people to you. May your love, the love that meant you went to the cross to save us all, be felt now by all in this world, and may your whole world come to you. You said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." So let us, your people, everyone one on earth, know that peace and, through knowing it, have hearts that are not troubled or afraid. And as you saved Saul, so Lord we ask you to save your people here on earth. Amen

Tuesday (Timothy and Titus)

Reading – Hebrews Chapter 10, verses 1 to 10

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will, my God.'" First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Lord Jesus, you made the ultimate sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Because of that sacrifice, we can know, for sure, that we are forgiven our sins, if only we come to you and repent. Nothing other than your death and resurrection could have done that and we cannot get our heads around what you went through for us to save us. Help us now, your whole world, to live as saved, holy people and spread your word and the knowledge of your sacrifice to all who will hear it and come to you because of it. You did your Father's will to save us – now let us live for, and through you, so that your whole world can be saved. Amen

Wednesday (World Holocaust Day)

The Parable of the Sower and what it means

Reading – Mark Chapter 4, verses 1 to 20

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop - some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

Lord Jesus, help us today to read the parable of the sower with fresh eyes and remind ourselves of what it truly means. Help us to be like the seed that falls on good soil, truly hearing your word and acting on it. Help us to be like the seed falling on good soil, and hear your word, accept it and spread it, thus helping to produce a crop for you. Help us to be like the seed that falls on the good soil, and always follow you in and your words in our lives, and helping others to do the same. Help us to be your people, your disciples, true children of God. Amen

Thursday (Thomas Aquinas)

Reading – Mark Chapter 4, verses 21 to 25

He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.” “Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you - and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”

Lord Jesus, help us never to keep your message to ourselves, but rather tell as many as we are able all about you and your good news. Help us to keep learning more and more about you, and as we do so, help more and more people to know more too. Help us to keep your message out in the open, at a time when more and more want to see it hidden away as an unimportance. May we keep shouting from the rooftops, “Jesus is our Saviour – Jesus is your Saviour – Jesus is the World’s Saviour – come to him and be saved. Help us to live our lives as saved people to bring more and more people to you. Amen

Friday

Reading – Mark Chapter 4, verses 26 to 34

He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.” With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Lord Jesus, you tended your harvest, your people through your life on earth, and continue to do so today. Help us not to allow ourselves to think we are nothing – because of your tending, we can and will be able to do everything you ask us to do. Because of your tending, we can and are your people on earth. When we think of the mustard seed, help us not to think that our ministry for you cannot start small and be successful. If our audience is one, you are there. If our audience is on the phone, you are there. If our audience is ourselves, you are there. Thank you Lord Jesus that we can always lean on you knowing you are always there. Thank you that, even though your ministry on earth started in a relatively small way, it ended in the biggest way possible – saving the sins of the world on the cross. Thank you Lord Jesus, that you are our Saviour, and the world’s Saviour. Amen

Saturday (Charles, King & Martyr)

Reading – Mark Chapter 4, verses 35 to the end

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Lord Jesus, when we think of the calming of the waves, it can be easy to read it in a detached way – of course it happened, now let's move on. But help us today, Jesus, to realise just how amazing, just how incredible, just how miraculous what you did that day was. And when we do, help us in the difficult times, such as we are going through right now, to still maintain our faith, and know that you do care and that you are here for us all and that you will never leave us. Calm our waves, Lord Jesus. We believe – forgive our unbelief. Amen

Sunday (4th Sunday of Epiphany OR Presentation of Christ in the Temple)

Reading – Psalm 76, verses 1 to 6

**In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me.
Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel. For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you.**

Lord God, just like the psalmist, help us to take refuge in you, and let us never be put to shame. In your righteousness, save us from the current pandemic and deliver us and your whole world from its grasp. You are our hope, our confidence and you are our Sovereign Lord. Help us to always rely on you, knowing that if we do so, we will never be disappointed. Save us, Lord God, and be our true Rock of refuge in this changing world.
Amen