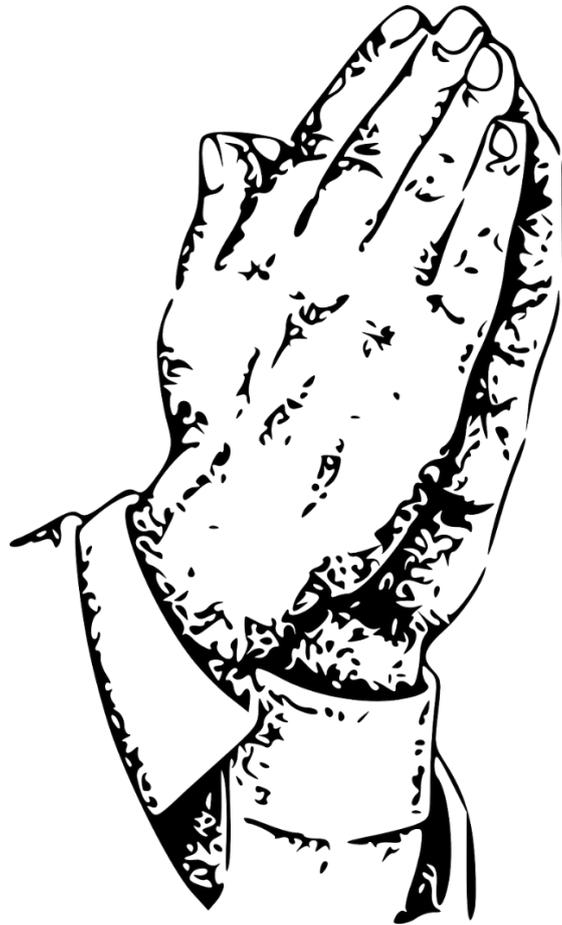


# NOVEMBER REFLECTIONS



ST SAVIOUR'S RETFORD

## Introduction from Rev Ben Clayton

This booklet contains a weekly reflection for the month of November based on talks given at St Saviour's. Each reflection is accompanied by a Church of England weekly prayer for the Coronavirus crisis. A series of shorter prayers for each day and daily Bible readings for November are also included.

May they bless, encourage and strengthen you at this difficult time.

The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;  
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.  
(Psalm 18:2, NIV)

Yours prayerfully,

*Ben Clayton*



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## REFLECTION 1 - LOVE

*Read John 15:9-17*

Remembrance marks the time of year where we think of those who have given their lives in the service of their country in wars past and present. This year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW2, which we marked with our VE Day doorstep celebrations in May and VJ day in August when we remembered the so called Forgotten Army who fought in the Far East.

As we think of those who have served and the many who have given their lives we remember the courage they showed, but also the cost that they and their loved ones bore; especially those who died or carry the ongoing scars of conflict both physical and mental.

As we remember their sacrifice it points us to the even greater sacrifice of Jesus who gave up his life; not for his friends or those who deserve it, but for a humanity that had turned it's back on God and plunged his good world into conflict and chaos. Such is God's love that he looks on us with all our mistakes and failings and doesn't give up on us. But in love gives up his own life, so that we can be at peace with him now and forever.

In the face of such love how can our hearts not be warmed and our desire be to love as he loved us.

## **Weekly Prayer (9-15 November)**

Loving God,  
at this time of crisis  
when so many are suffering,  
we pray for our nation and our world.  
Give our leaders wisdom,  
our Health Service strength,  
our people hope.  
Lead us through these parched and difficult days  
to the fresh springs of joy and comfort  
that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## REFLECTION 2 - THE STORM

*Read Mark 4:35-41*

The disciples are facing a serious storm that made even seasoned fishermen fear for their lives. They naturally look to their friend Jesus for help, but they find him fast asleep on a cushion. But Jesus soon reassures his disciples that whilst it may look like he's asleep he's still very much in control. He's the only one who is calm in the midst of all the chaos. He soon gets up and with a few words shows his disciples that he cares and also that he has the power to help his friends in even the most scary of situations. By the end of the story they are even more scared and in awe of Jesus than they were by the storm. One day he'd go a step further to show just how much he cared as at the cross he faced the storm that we deserve, so that we could be at peace with God and rest in his Father's embrace.

2020 feels like one storm after another and in all the chaos that's confronted us it's easy to think that Jesus has gone to sleep and forgotten about us, or that he doesn't care. The calming of the storm reminds us that even when everything seems like chaos Jesus is still in control. If we follow him today then someone is with us who is bigger and scarier than any storm and who cares deeply for us.

There's a story about some Indian Ocean islanders who survived the terrible Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004. In their history that had been handed down they knew that when the sea behaved a certain way they must run and take refuge in the caves in the hills to stay safe. Doing that meant they could weather the great wave.

Do we know that we can find refuge in Jesus when storms come? That he is big enough? Yes he might seem far off, but he is in control and he cares.

Because he has entered the greatest storm out of love for us.

## Weekly Prayer (16-22 November)

Loving Father God,  
be with us in our distress;  
be with our families, friends, and neighbours,  
our country and our world.  
Give health to the sick,  
hope to the fearful,  
and comfort to mourners.  
Give wisdom to our frontline and key workers,  
insight to our Government,  
and patience to us all.  
Overcome disease with the power of your new life,  
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## REFLECTION 3 - I'VE SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE BEFORE...

*Read Mark 6:45-56*

You get the sense in Mark's Gospel that what Jesus says and does is meant to remind us of someone. In chapter 6 he's just fed over 5,000 people (v.44), he's walking on water passing by his awestruck disciples (v.48), and a more literal way of saying "it is I" is "I am." (v.50).

Mark has put these incidents here to make us have an "*I've seen this person somewhere before*" moment. It might not be immediately obvious to us, but for Jews of the day who would have known the Old Testament story really, really well, these are words and actions that are meant to bring to mind the Exodus; the time when God came to rescue his people out of Egypt. When he passed by their houses, because of the lambs' blood on the door. When he parted the seas to let his people go free. When God fed his people with manna in the wilderness. An Exodus that began with God revealing his name to Moses as "I am that I am".

You see apart from making it a bit easier for the disciples to row across a lake there's no significant benefit to this miracle, other than to show that Jesus is God himself. The mighty "I am" in human flesh. The Son of the Father, so connected to him that he would so often rise early to talk with him. This is who Jesus is - God himself. God himself who has come to rescue not just his people, but the world. Only this time of course Jesus himself would be the lamb.

Only the disciples don't get it do they...How about us? Do we see Jesus for who he is. The great "I am" in human flesh. The one who has come to rescue and restore us. Do we see Jesus for who he really is? Do we see that we need his rescue? Have we let him have control of all our lives?

When we do, whether we're rowing against the wind or it's all plain sailing, we have every reason to take courage and trust him.

## **Weekly Prayer (23-29 November)**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
in these dark and difficult days, we turn our hearts to you.  
In ages past, you have delivered our nation from disaster.  
Do it again, we pray.  
Give wisdom beyond human wisdom to our leaders,  
Give strength beyond human strength to the NHS and all our  
frontline workers.  
Give comfort beyond human comfort to the elderly and all who  
grieve.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
in these dark and difficult days,  
turn your face towards us,  
have mercy upon us,  
and heal our land, we pray.  
Amen.

## REFLECTION 4 - A LOVE STORY

### *Read Ruth*

The book of Ruth is probably the closest thing the Bible has to a romantic comedy. In the midst of the Bible's grand narrative about God's dealings with the planet and its people, which is usually preoccupied with kings, prophets and world events is this short quirky tale of tragedy and hope, life and death, family and friendship, kindness and love. Of ordinary people facing life's highs and lows and a God who is alive and active in all circumstances even and perhaps especially in the worst. The book of Ruth reminds us...

*God cares for and looks after his people* in times of tragedy as we witness Naomi wrestling with her faith in the face of the loss of her husband and sons. We see that God doesn't give up when she is angry or upset, but loves, cares and provides sometimes seemingly through coincidence, other times through people like Ruth.

We see that *God cares for the poor and needy*, as destitute Naomi and Ruth are helped by the gleaning laws of Israel that allowed her to collect grain from the edge of the fields, and are provided for by generous Boaz.

We see that *God loves and rescues us*. Ruth is an outsider from a group of people that were enemies of God and his people. Yet the story is one of her being welcomed in with kindness and generosity. It's a story of rescue and redemption. The custom was that a relative would marry a widow in order to for her family to be provided for and for the dead man's name to continue. This is what Boaz does for Ruth and Naomi. And Ruth's descendant Jesus does the same and more for us. In love he looks on us in our poverty and disgrace and pays the price to rescue us so that we can be welcomed into God's family, knowing his presence with us in the hard times and the good, knowing his care, knowing his love. In both the hard times and the good.

## Weekly Prayer (30 November - 6 December)

Loving God,  
your Son Jesus Christ came that we might have life and have it abundantly;  
pour out your blessing upon our nation;  
where there is illness,  
bring your healing touch;  
where there is fear,  
strengthen us with the knowledge of your presence;  
where there is uncertainty,  
build us up in faith;  
where there is dishonesty,  
lead us into truth;  
where there is discord,  
may we know the harmony of your love;  
this we ask in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

## SHORT DAILY PRAYERS

<b>Sunday - Family, friends and loved ones</b>
We lift to God those we hold in our hearts - praying for their health, their well-being and their sense of hope. We pray that even when loved ones cannot physically be together they would not feel apart. We ask for God's help in our communicating, our connecting and our caring. Amen
<b>Monday - Schools and colleges, children and young people</b>
We pray for all those involved in the shaping of young lives. We give God thanks for the sacrifice and commitment of teachers and all those involved in serving children and young people in education. We pray that all might be nurtured and cared for and that every needful resource would be made available - that all lives can flourish even in these difficult times and that no-one would be overlooked. Amen
<b>Tuesday- Elderly, isolated and vulnerable</b>
We echo God's commitment to those most at risk of this virus by praying today for those who are particularly vulnerable and isolated: praying for their deliverance, protection and comfort. We hold before God those who care for them - that they would be strengthened and encouraged in this work. Amen
<b>Wednesday - Businesses, the workplace and economic wellbeing</b>
In this time of great challenge, we pray for the economic wellbeing of the country. We remember before God those who face great uncertainty in their work. We lift before God those who have lost their jobs and face an uncertain and difficult future. We pray for a renewed commitment to our common life together. Amen
<b>Thursday - The NHS and other key workers</b>
Our God is the great healer - and the agent used more than any other is the NHS. Today we voice our gratitude for those who serve this country in the National Health Service and pray for that God would prosper the work of their hands - that they would all be encouraged in their continued work of sacrifice and care amongst us. Amen

**Friday - National and Local government**

We pray for those who are in positions of authority with responsibility for decision making at national and local level at this difficult time. We ask that God would give great wisdom, deep commitment to all and right judgment. Amen

**Saturday - All who are grieving, and all suffering with physical and mental ill-health**

‘Lord the one you love is ill....’ (John 11:3) We bring to God all those who suffer in body, mind, spirit or with grief. We ask that in God’s great loving kindness they might know God’s sustaining presence amidst their pain. We pray for those who are stretched beyond their own capacity to cope and remain hopeful - that in the roar of these waterfalls God would bring a sense of coherence, comfort and strength. Amen

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