

Prayer ~ Sunday 24th February 2019 No 897

Lectionary Readings: Genesis 45: 3-11,15; Psalm 37: 1-11,39-40; 1 Corinthians 15: 35-38,42-50; Luke 6: 27-38

For reflection and prayer

- **Genesis 45:** Joseph sees God's hand in all that has happened to him with no thoughts of revenge. His brothers no doubt have been plagued with guilt, as we surely would be. This is a very different Joseph from the arrogant boy sold by his brothers. The circumstances of his life, good and bad, have served to transform him and become all he can be by the grace of God. That was a choice he made. We, too, have a choice. How do we respond to adverse circumstances and when people treat us badly? We are called to be like Jesus who prayed from the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.' This is the life-giving response, perhaps the greatest challenge in living a God-centred life.
- **Psalm 37:** Here are a few verses from 'Psalms for Praying' for us to reflect on: *'Take delight in the Beloved; enjoy the bountiful gifts of Love Be still before the Beloved and wait patiently in silence; pray for those who prosper by deceitful means Those who live in harmony shall know peace, assurance, gratitude and love Love walks beside those with open hearts Love invites all to open their hearts.'*
- **1 Corinthians 15:** Many people today would like an answer to the question the Corinthians asked Paul: What happens after death? We want to know. But we are called to live by faith, by faith in a God who himself is a mystery. And what happens after death is a mystery. We share life with God here and now and we have his

Spirit within us to bring us new life day by day. And we have the assurance that, as we share life with God now, so we will share life with him after death. But whatever form that life will take remains a mystery. Let us move forward with faith and confidence in the God who never lets us down.

- **Luke 6:** Luke describes here God's way of love and forgiveness - no tit for tat, but a life of generous, selfless, sacrificial love, praying for those who hate us and are out to harm us. We are called to love our enemies and pray for them. This, I believe, is what enables us to be Christ to people. Each Sunday we pray, 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' Do we really reflect on what we are saying when we pray that prayer? Forgiveness may be the most difficult thing we are ever called upon to demonstrate in our lives as Christians. To forgive those who have hurt us, to love those who hate us, to let go of resentment and bitterness and to forgive ourselves for our mistakes and imperfections - this is the way we demonstrate that we are growing into Christ. May we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit within us to access the grace of God available to all.

A prayer

Lord, you have embraced your world in Jesus, wrapping it around with faith and love and forgiveness, offering hope through a new way of living. May our lives do this for others as we seek to be Christ to people, reaching out with your love and forgiveness and being signs of how the world is meant to be. Amen.