

**Lectionary readings: Hosea 1: 2-10; Psalm 85; Colossians 2: 6-15; Luke 11: 1-13**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Hosea 1:** A 'shocking' instruction for God to give to Hosea - to marry a prostitute. This was an acted parable: the people of God were like prostitutes, going after other gods. And Hosea's offspring were given symbolic names: 'Jezreel' - a constant reminder of punishment which God's people were bringing upon themselves; 'Not Loved' - a reminder that God's patience was running out and there would be no more forgiveness; 'Not my People': God's people would no longer be known as God's people. But the final message is that the one called 'Not Loved' would be God's beloved, and the one called 'Not my People' would be children of the living God. God is a God of love and forgiveness. Is this the God we know?
- **Psalm 85:** The Psalmist begins by recounting God's blessings. How about counting God's blessings each day this week? Then he prays that God will revive His people, awaken them to His love, give them new life, new hope, new joy. I love v8 in 'Psalms for Praying': *'Listen, O people, in the silent chapel of your heart; and the Beloved will speak peace to you.'* Perhaps we might like to do that this week and listen for what God wants to say to us.
- **Colossians 2:** Paul urges us to live Christ Jesus, that is, make Christ the centre of our lives; and let our living spill out into thanksgiving. Arguing about the faith gets us nowhere. Daily feeding on God, letting Him nourish us spiritually, will help us to grow in faith and in love.

As we open ourselves to God every day this week, let's allow the breath of God, the Spirit of God, to flow in and through us so that we are filled with His life and love.

- **Luke 11:** In this passage we have Luke's version of The Lord's Prayer. Here it is in The Message: *'Father, reveal who You are. Set the world right. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with You and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil.'* Here are a few other verses: *'Ask and you'll get. Seek and you'll find. Knock and the door will open .... The Father who conceived you in love will give the Holy Spirit when you ask Him.'* This raises the questions: 'What is prayer?' and 'Does prayer work?' Many people have stopped praying because they have not got what they asked for. The first point I would like to make is that prayer is not a magical formula to persuade God to give us what we want. Prayer is a relationship with God; prayer is opening our lives to God and sharing our lives with Him; prayer is an awareness of God's presence with us; prayer is seeking to be one with God, getting to know God, entering into a deep, loving, intimate relationship with God. When we do that, we get to know God a little bit more; we get a glimpse into the Mystery of God. Then, when we pray, we pray according to God's loving purpose, with our focus on Him. Then the whole of life becomes a prayer, and we go through each day conscious of God's presence with us, aware of His loving arms around us, knowing how deeply loved we are, and allowing God to fill us with His love so that we go out to love like Him, and so make this world a better place. May God journey with each one of us as we open ourselves to Him and live prayerfully this week.