

Lectionary readings: Hosea 11: 1-11; Psalm 107: 1-9, 43; Colossians 3: 1-11; Luke 12: 13-21

For reflection and prayer

- **Hosea 11:** This could just as well be a description of our own society today. God has reached out in love to us and goes on loving us, despite the fact that we have gone after other gods (sex, drugs, alcohol, football, TV etc), substituting these things for God, and discovering that these things don't set us free, but lead us into greater bondage. We seem to prefer bondage to freedom. And our whole society is falling to pieces because we are hell-bent on going our own way, our 'gods' destroying us. And all the time we are unwilling to face up to who and what we are because it's too painful to acknowledge. Let's this week reflect on the 'gods' we are worshipping. Let's face up to our deep inner needs and how these can be met. Let's ask God to draw us by the cords of love into His loving arms where alone we can become who He created us to be.
- **Psalm 107:** God is offering us salvation, healing, wholeness. If we find ourselves wandering lost and confused, hungry and thirsty, not knowing where to turn, our hearts despondent, let's turn to God, recognising that in God, our Beloved, there is help and healing, life-giving love, freedom from fear. Let's spend time this week in stillness and silence, listening to God's voice, the voice of our Beloved, who alone can satisfy our hungry hearts. We might like to reflect further on how we see God - as our Beloved, with nothing but love in His heart for us? Or ...?

- **Colossians 3:** Paul urges us to live a new resurrection life, not absorbed with the things of the world, but alert to where God is and what He is doing, seeing things from His perspective, not just from a human perspective; not living to please ourselves, but allowing God to shape our lives. That means dealing with things that spoil our lives e.g. bad temper, meanness of spirit, irritability, unholy talk etc. That means changing our whole attitude to life, no longer pigeon-holing people, but reaching out in love and acceptance. God wants to transform our lives. So how about reflecting on what is spoiling our life and preventing us from being all that God wants us to be. How are we allowing God into our everyday life? Is He peripheral, or at the centre of all we are and do?
- **Luke 12:** *'Life is not defined by what you have.'* (v15 The Message) Surely a message very relevant to the society in which we live. Are we living to possess more and more things? Or is our heart open to God, aware of what is really important and of lasting value? Are we like the man in the parable - more concerned about amassing material possessions than about growing in our relationship with God? What do we find our security in? It might be good for us to reflect on how much time we give each day to developing our relationship with God and growing in our faith?

A prayer

Lord, I realise that I need to be wholehearted in my life of faith. Give me the courage to look honestly at my life and be willing to face up to the 'gods' that preoccupy me. Do I really desire You, Lord, with all my heart? If not, give me grace to desire You and to see You as my dearly Beloved, who alone can satisfy my deep inner needs. Amen.