

Lectionary readings: Micah 4: 1-8; Psalm 9: 9-20; 2 Thessalonians 2: 13- 3: 5; Luke 1: 68-79 (Remembrance)

For reflection and prayer

- **Micah 4:** This passage speaks of a time of peace and blessing when there will be no more wars, and everyone will live in harmony. Isn't this what we pray for every Sunday in our prayers of intercession? This is the Kingdom of God which God wants to bring in here and now; we don't have to wait till a future age. So why are there still wars and so many troubled areas in our world? The truth is that God won't do it without our co-operation; and we won't allow God to teach us how to live. We tend to think dualistically, that is, in terms of them and us, when we need to see our inter-connectedness and learn from Jesus how to love one another and so bring peace and harmony where we live and watch the ripples of love spreading out farther and farther.
- **Psalm 9:** Three verses stand out for me in this reading. Verse 15: *'The nations are sinking into a pit of their own making; into the web which they are weaving, will they be caught.'* Verse 16: *'Love will make itself known with a strength greater than ten thousand armies.'* Verses 19-20: *'Arise, O Love! Have Your way with us; let the nations bow before You and ask forgiveness. Let Your healing light stream forth, O Love. Let the nations commit themselves to Your plan.'* (Psalms for Praying)
The greatest power this world knows is the power of God's love. Let's pray this week that each one of us will

let God's love take root in our lives and transform our living more and more.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:** God is inviting all of us to open ourselves up to His Spirit, as Jesus did, and live our lives under the power of the Spirit of God, lives that will, as a result, be characterised by love. May God deliver us from the cynicism of our age and fill us with hope, putting fresh heart into us, invigorating us through His Spirit who lives within each one of us. May we have a deeper understanding of God's love and experience His salvation - healing, wholeness, transformation, holiness - reaching out with love to all.
- **Luke 1:** God came in Jesus to set us free. But sadly, we prefer to go our own way and reject the salvation that God offers us. Let's open our hearts afresh to God and allow His Spirit to lead us to choose love rather than hate, forgiveness rather than revenge, faith rather than fear, generosity rather than greed, humility rather than pride, liberation rather than oppression, harmony rather than conflict, peace rather than war. God has shown us the path of mercy, the path of love, the path of peace, the path of forgiveness. But we need to choose that way.

A prayer (from Donald Hilton)

O God, we pray for a new awareness of the battlefield within us; new ways of channelling aggressive instincts; new thought-patterns, language and ideas; a new appreciation of the world as one community; new methods of dialogue and negotiation; new attempts to befriend those different from ourselves; new readiness to forgive and be reconciled; new visions, new love, new hope ... and a new faith that the peace that passes understanding can reach out from within us to embrace the world. Amen.