

Lectionary readings: Isaiah 12; Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13; Luke 21: 5-19

For reflection and prayer

- **Isaiah 12:** This is a hymn of praise. Isaiah praises God for coming among us to bring us salvation. We tend to look forward to salvation after death, but God wants to heal us now and make us whole people, at one with Him, at one with ourselves, at one with others, at one with creation. This will come about when we open ourselves up to God and *'drink deeply from his fountain'* of life and love. God has come among us and lives in our hearts. This is cause for rejoicing indeed. So let this be a week of rejoicing in God's presence with us and let's experience His healing and wholeness more and more.
- **Psalm 98:** Here are a few verses from 'Psalms for Praying' for us to reflect on: *'Love has done marvellous things and by the strength of Your indwelling Presence we, too, are called to do great things; we are set free through Love's forgiveness and truth Yes, your steadfast love and faithfulness are an ever-present gift in our lives Sing songs of praise extolling Love's way; lift up your hearts with gratitude and joy. Let the voices of all people blend in harmony Before the Beloved who radiates Love to all the earth.'*
- **2 Thessalonians 3:** This is quite a strong word from Paul to the Thessalonian Christians. He is urging all the people in the church to pull their weight. This is a message for all church congregations - not to leave the work to a willing few, but for each one of us prayerfully to reflect on our particular gifts and how we can use

these for the blessing of the church. v13: *'And I say to the rest of you, dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.'* The church is a fellowship of weak, imperfect people. But God loves each one and invites each one of us to work together to build up the church in faith and love, treating one another with understanding and forgiveness, affirming and encouraging one another in love. Let's allow God into our lives more and more to help us live in love.

- **Luke 21:** Wars, uprisings, earthquakes, famines, epidemics, persecution, betrayal, breakdown of family loyalties - all this is happening around us. Some use this passage to predict the end of the world as we know it. But have not all these things happened down through the centuries? Trying to predict when the end will be, as some do, is futile and serves no good purpose. Jesus is urging us to be faithful through all the suffering that life brings and experience God's strength. We are called to plunge ourselves into the thick of the suffering, injustices, areas of need, reaching out with compassion to those who are hurting, allowing God's purposes to be fulfilled more and more

A prayer

'O Lord, over the nations now, where is the dove of peace? Her wings are broken. O Lord, while precious children starve, the tools of war increase; their bread is stolen. O Lord, dark powers are poised to flood our streets with hate and fear. We must awaken! O Lord, let love reclaim the lives that sin would sweep away, and let Your Kingdom come. Have mercy, Lord. Forgive us, Lord. Restore us, Lord. Revive Your church again.'
(Part of CH4 Hymn 708)