

Lectionary readings: Exodus 19: 2-8a; Psalm 100; Romans 5 1-8; Matthew 9: 35 - 10: 8

For reflection and prayer

- **Exodus 19:** God says to His people through Moses: *'You are my own special treasure.'* This is what God says to us. And He requires a response from us: He wants us to listen to Him and live as He wants us to. Do you know yourself as God's 'special treasure'? Are you prepared to open your heart more and more to God who loves you and be all He wants you to be? The Israelites replied: *'Everything God says we will do.'* What is your reply? The amazing thing is that no matter how many promises we make to God and how often we fail to keep these, God goes on loving us and calling us His 'special treasure' for He never gives up on us.
- **Psalm 100:** Here is a modern interpretation of this Psalm of praise for us to reflect on this week: *'Break forth into exclamations of joy and gladness, you who serve the Lord! God is not dead! He is ever our God! He made us; we belong to Him; we are His children and servants. And His love for us never runs out; His care and concern for us will go on forever. Let the world see our manifestations of joy! Let us lift up our voices in songs of praise and surrender our lives as continual offerings of thanksgiving! Let us bless His name forever!'* (Psalms Now)
- **Romans 5:** Paul has outlined what God has done for us in Christ and says: *'We throw our doors open to God, and discover at the same moment that He has already thrown open His door to us.'* (v2 The Message) We

have free access to God. How often do we avail ourselves of this gift? Paul says: *'We stand in the wide open spaces of God's grace and glory.'* As a result, our lives should be characterised by faith, by praise, by hope - even when times are hard. The hard times teach us a lot about ourselves and a lot about God. It is in times of trial and suffering that we can know God's presence with us in a very special way, and feel His loving arms enfolding us. God is Love and He cannot ever forsake us. He pours Himself into us when we are empty enough to receive Him. So there is blessing when we experience emptiness and inadequacy and despair.

- **Matthew 9:** Jesus taught and healed wherever He went. He saw people around Him whose lives were *'confused and aimless, like sheep without a shepherd'*. (v36 The Message) And so He encourages His disciples *'on your knees and pray...'* (v38 The Message) This is a message for all of us today. We are all called to be people of prayer. We don't have to go to some distant land to be missionaries; all around us are people who are *'confused and aimless, like sheep without a shepherd'*. He calls us to care for the *'bruised and hurt'* people around us - and there are many of them - to help bring new life to those who have no hope, no purpose in life. In other words, we are called to be Christ where we are.

A prayer

'Oh, let us dare to be vulnerable! Let us dare to believe that we are as capable as ...Jesus of acts of love and compassion. But first we must be vulnerable. Yet still, in the face of God's grace, we must cherish our possibilities. It is then that we dare to step forward in trust and tenderness God will transform our small hearts into vessels of great grace. We are capable of healing the world.' (Edwina Gateley)