

Lectionary readings: Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24; Psalm 100; Ephesians 1: 15-23; Matthew 25: 31-46

For reflection and prayer

- **Ezekiel 34:** God is our shepherd. He is searching for all of us, for we have all strayed from Him. He wants to rescue us, to take care of us, to bring us back to Himself where we belong. He wants to heal our wounds for we are all wounded by life's experiences. He comes to us in our weakness and wants to strengthen us. He recognises, though, that we have become fat and rich at the expense of others because we have been self-seeking. That's why He has stepped in and sent Jesus to lead us. What response are we making to God's desire for us to be all He wants to be to us?
- **Psalm 100:** Here is the psalm in 'Psalms for Praying' so let's do just that and pray this psalm this week. *'Sing a joyful noise to the Beloved, all peoples of the earth! Serve Love with a glad heart! Join hands in the great Dance of Life! Know that the Beloved of your heart is the Divine Presence! Love created us, and we belong to the Most High. We are born to be loving expressions of the Creator's Divine Plan. Open the gates of your heart with gratitude and enter Love's court with praise! Give thanks to the Beloved; bless Love's holy Name! For Love is of God, and lives in your heart for ever, with faith, truth and joy, now and in all that is to come. Alleluia! Amen!'*
- **Ephesians 1:** v23 The Message: *'The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.'* What a responsibility and

what a privilege to show Christ to the world by how we speak and act. Let's open ourselves to God's Spirit allowing God to fill us with Himself so that we can be Christ's body here on earth where we are. v19 The Message: *'O the utter extravagance of His work in us who trust him - endless energy, boundless strength.'* One body, all working together, each member filled with God's life and overflowing with His love. That makes for a powerful force for good. May we allow Him to fill us this week in the extravagant way He wants to.

- **Matthew 25:** It's not marks of honour which the world bestows that Jesus counts as important. Nor is it the things we are most proud of e.g. success, the kind of job we do, our wealth, even our religion. What matters to God is how we treat the people around us. Jesus is asking whether we have recognised Him in the people we meet. Have we lived our lives lovingly, prayerfully, compassionately? Have we reached out with love to those who are broken, hungry, homeless, disadvantaged, marginalised, physically, mentally and spiritually? Have we responded to people as Jesus did, seeing everyone as important, of value, as God's beloved?

Hymn 360 (CH4) *'Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets, curing those who suffer, touching those he greets. Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too: let my care be active, healing, just like you. Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets, where each sign of hatred he, with love, defeats. Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too: where good conquers evil let me dance with you. Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets, 'Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet. Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few: walk one step before me; I will follow you.'* (John Bell and Graham Maule)