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I Thirst

“I thirst.” (John 19:28) We can understand at some level why Jesus, on the cross, experienced a terrible **thirst**. He had lost much blood and, before the unusual darkness, had been hanging unprotected in the sun. Jesus, fully God, was also fully human. This expression of human need, John tells us, was to fulfil the scripture – in **Psalm 22**, David, under Holy Spirit inspiration, wrote: ‘My strength has dried up like sun-baked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.’ (**Psalm 22:15**).

Yet Christ’s **thirst** was more than just physical. The Bible also describes a **‘spiritual thirst’** - the desire for fellowship with God our maker (e.g. **Psalm 63:1-2**). Jesus, the eternal Son of God, had enjoyed eternal fellowship with his Father up until this moment. Then, on the cross, as he bore our sins, he was cut off from that fellowship – and so experienced an intense **spiritual thirst**.

Jesus is a sympathetic saviour who is well acquainted with every form of suffering - physical and spiritual. He was prepared to face them so that **our spiritual thirst** might be quenched for ever.

‘I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Behold, I freely give the living water, thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live!” I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream: my thirst was quenched, my soul revived and now I live in him.’ (H Bonar)

A Prayer for Today

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for all you suffered on our behalf. Thank you for the new life that has flowed from your sacrifice on the cross.



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The Curtain

As Christ died, Mark's Gospel tells us that the **curtain of the Temple** was torn in two from top to bottom ([Mark 15:38](#)). This seems a strange detail until you realise its significance. In [Exodus 26](#), God set out his plans for the **Tabernacle**, the Temple's forerunner, specifying the making of a **curtain** to be hung before the **Holy of Holies**, the place of God's presence. The **curtain** was a barrier - sinful humans could not enter the presence of God and live. Only the high priest could enter, only once a year, to make an **Atonement sacrifice**.

When the **curtain** tore at Jesus' death, it signalled a new era. Jesus was the final **Atonement sacrifice**, his death sufficing for all sinners for all time, allowing all who rely on his shed blood to enter God's presence whenever they want, as often as they want, with no intermediary needed. The **curtain** was thick and about 30 feet tall - and ripped top to bottom, a sure sign of God's hand at work, eager to open the way for repentant sinners to come to him.

So often we take it for granted that we can talk to God, present requests or just enjoy being with him. Let's remind ourselves afresh of the **privilege** Christ's death has brought. In a year when so many have not been able to enter the homes of loved ones, **it's great to know that we can always enter God's home to talk with our Heavenly Father**. His door is always open. *(Debbie)*

A Prayer for Today

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of prayer and open access to your presence – free to us and so costly to Jesus. May we exercise this privilege regularly.



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Mary (Part 1)

In our [Advent calendar](#) we remembered that 'Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.'

Soon after the birth, she and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and, whilst there, a devout man, **Simeon**, expressed the words we read in [Luke 2:29-32](#). Mary and Joseph marvelled at this and also words about Jesus from the prophetess **Anna**. In Matthew we hear how God sent the family as refugees to **Egypt**, as Herod wanted Jesus killed. Later, back in **Nazareth**, they settled into life with Joseph working as a carpenter and, together with Mary, raising Jesus and the rest of the family. She must have noticed how **special** he was as 'the child grew and became strong in spirit' ([Luke 1:80](#)).

When Jesus was twelve, we read about the family visiting **Jerusalem** for the Feast of the **Passover** where, thinking they had lost him in the crowd, they searched everywhere for him. We hear the worry in her voice, "Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you" ([Luke 2:48](#)) - and also feel their puzzlement when he says he had to be in his **Father's House**. So 'Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men' and we read that his mother treasured all these things in her heart' ([Luke 2:51-52](#)) trusting that all would go well. (*Brenda*)

A Prayer for Today

May we too, Lord, along with Mary, treasure the thoughts of Jesus in our hearts, and ponder continually all that he has graciously done for us.



BBC Calendar for Lent Day 5



The Gospel of the Kingdom

After his temptations, Jesus returned to his home county of Galilee and started to preach the **gospel of the kingdom** (Mark 1:14,15). The 'kingdom of God' is better translated as the 'kingship of God', as the stress of the original Greek is not so much on the 'realm' over which God rules, but on the nature of the reign itself. The term recalls the promise of the Old Testament prophets that God himself would come in person and save his people and rule over them (Isaiah 40:10,11). In other words, the coming of the **kingdom** is the coming God's messianic rule, marking the age of salvation through the 'outpouring' of the Spirit.

During the ministry of Jesus, whenever his **kingship** was welcomed, **kingdom-blessings**, like the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life, were experienced. After the events of Easter and the Ascension, these **kingdom-blessings** have gone global, for his Lordship is now universal. That is why the disciples were given the Great Commission to go into the whole world and make disciples of all nations. Thus, wherever Jesus Christ is lifted up, his **kingly**, saving power can be felt in the here and now.

Are we living fully, today, in the power of God's rule? For the living Lord Jesus can make a big, eternal difference to your life and mine. *(Colin)*

A Prayer for Today

Lord, create space in my life for more kindness and less spitefulness, greater generosity, fewer self-centred needs, stronger compassion and weakened judgement of others.



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Forgiveness

The story of the deceased 'Yorkshire Ripper' springs to mind. This brutal, heartless and cold murderer, with a wife at home, killed young women in the dead of the night in a cowardly yet cold manner. He had done nothing worthy of **forgiveness**, in particular in the hearts and minds of his victim's relatives. The intriguing thing is that the son of his second (recorded) victim, whose Mum was fatally murdered in Leeds, said in various media outlets that **he forgave** the man who killed his Mum. Justifiably, he could have resented that man throughout his life - for the terrible experience of the untimely snatching away of his mother, for having to live in care and other pitiful reasons, BUT he **chose to forgive**, and did this both privately and publicly. The picture to the right ([click to enlarge it](#)) depicts Mary Magdalene, who mercifully received the **forgiveness of Jesus** and was recorded to then have lived a holy, unblemished life for the rest of her days. As we are freely enjoying the **redemption** that comes from being heirs and heiresses of THE gracious King, let us imbibe the **spirit of forgiveness** towards every and anyone who has wronged us. *(Victor)*



A Prayer for Today

Lord Jesus, clear away the clutter of petty grudges, remove smudges of resentment and bitterness, and grant me the grace to forgive as I have been forgiven.

'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'

Romans 3:23-24



BBC Calendar for Lent Day 3



It Was for Me

As a boy, Jesus preached in the temple, well pleasing to his Father God.
Baptised by John in the Jordan - "Son whom I love" came God's Word.
Now led by the Holy Spirit, a journey to the wilderness he made
And tempted 40 days by the devil, to every temptation he said,
"You must worship the Lord and serve only him,
His angels guard me wherever I am led. Do not put your God to the test."
Then the devil finished his tempting and fled.
Jesus now began teaching and healing, crowds flocked to hear what he said.
Some mocked and jeered, others listened, trusted and believed.
All this time, Jesus continued to obey and do as his Father willed,
At God's appointed time, triumphantly entering Jerusalem, another scripture fulfilled.
Having celebrated the Last Supper, soon after he was betrayed and tried,
And as he hung on the cruel cross obeying his Father's will,
The awful price for our sins was paid. **Lord, please help us to appreciate and thank you for the great sacrifice of love you made.** *(Morag)*

"Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me. You went to Calvary, there you died for me. You rose up from the grave, to me new life you gave. You're coming back again, and we with you shall reign. Thank you Lord for loving me."

(A Revell)

A Prayer for Today

Lord, may we appreciate what it cost for you to give your only Son for us. Let our lives show your love shining through so others will want to get to know you too.



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It Is Finished

Most of us, probably all of us, go through life and leave behind us **unfinished business** – projects we started but didn't complete, letters we meant to write but never got round to, places we meant to go with our children, but never quite found the time.

There's only one person in history who could truly say that he **finished** completely and perfectly everything he set out to do. The whole purpose of Jesus' life and ministry was to go to the cross, there to give his life for ours, satisfying completely the rightful judgement of God the Father against sin.

When Jesus said on the cross, "**It is finished!**", it was not a cry of despair, but one of triumph. In Greek it's just one word – **Tetelestai**. It was the word that was stamped on a debtor's bill when they had finally made the last payment that cleared them completely of their obligations – proof that they could no longer be held liable for what they owed. It meant '**paid in full**'.

Jesus, the humble, obedient servant of God, fulfilled his Father's mission perfectly. He **finished** the task and **paid in full** so that we never have to.

Hallelujah!

A Prayer for Today

Create in me a clean heart,
O God; and renew a right
spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10



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Lent

Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday**, which is traditionally a day of repentance when Christians confess their sins and profess their devotion to God. It is the period before **Easter**, when Christians remember Jesus's withdrawal into the **wilderness** for 40 days and nights. A **wilderness** is a rough, uninhabited or neglected region, not the sort of place where you would want to spend a long time.

The word '**Lent**' originally came from the word '**lencten**' meaning 'spring', a time when the days start to lengthen and things begin to spring up. You have probably noticed that happening this year. During **Lent**, many people decide to try to deny themselves as Jesus did and give something up that they love - perhaps chocolate, sweets or biscuits.

It is also a time to commemorate the **passion** and **death** of **Jesus Christ**, the Son of God, our Saviour, and an opportunity to think about all that it means to be a follower of him. *(Brenda)*

'Follow him, follow him, yield your life to him, he has conquered death, he is King of kings; accept the joy which he gives to those who yield their lives to him.' *(C Simmons)*

A Prayer for Today

Enlarge my heart with a spirit of gratitude this Lent, so that I recognise the simple gifts that lay in abundance all around me. In your precious name, I pray.

