

Prayer of approach

Loving God, we join together to worship you.

We come to offer you our praise, to marvel at your greatness

and to commit ourselves to your service.

We come to give thanks

to rejoice in all that you have given us and to offer our love in return.

We come to admit our faults and failings, to recognise our weakness

and to ask your forgiveness .

We come to pray for ourselves and others,

seeking your guidance and longing for your kingdom on earth.

We come to make our offering,

to bring our time, talents, money, and ourselves.

Loving God, we come to worship you in the conviction that you are with us now and that you hold all things and all people in your hands. As we reach out to you,

reach out to us, we pray , and fill every moment of every day with the light of your love and the peace of your presence.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Adapted from Prayers for all seasons, Nick Fawcett

Hymn Singing the Faith 161 Speak O Lord

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=ubRIJj8xkds>

Speak O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.

Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.

Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.

Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.

Words of power that can never fail;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.

Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.

And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.

Speak, O Lord, till your church is built
as the earth is filled with your glory.

Prayer from Singing the Faith 511

**Speak in the stillness, God we pray, come to our hearts and meet us here.
Bring us your peace for each new day - the gift of grace to earth from heaven.
We speak as though we have not heard and live as if we do not know
your love in Christ, the living Word - the gift of grace to earth from heaven.
When, in the anxious rush of days, we lose our hold on faith and you,
reclaim us with your calm embrace - the gift of grace to earth from heaven.
So may we be renewed in love, held and sustained by you alone.
Strengthened by you that we may prove a gift of grace to earth from heaven. Amen**

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Reading Mark 7: 1 – 8, 14 – 15, 21 – 23 The Passion translation

One day, the Pharisees and certain religious scholars came from Jerusalem and gathered around Jesus. They were shocked to find that some of Jesus' disciples ate bread without first observing the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating their meal. (For the Pharisees, like all other Jews, will not eat without first performing a ritual of pouring water over their cupped hands to keep the tradition of the elders. Similarly, when returning from the marketplace, they ceremonially wash themselves before eating. They also observed many other traditions, such as ceremonially washing cups, pitchers, and kettles.) So the Pharisees and religious scholars asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the age-old traditions passed down by our elders? They should first ceremonially wash their hands before eating."

Jesus replied, "You are hypocrites! How accurately did Isaiah prophesy about you phonies when he said: 'These people honour me with their words while their hearts run far away from me! Their worship is nothing more than a charade! For they continue to insist that their man-made traditions are equal to the instructions of God.

"You abandon God's commandments just to keep men's rituals, such as ceremonially washing utensils, cups, and other things."

Then Jesus called the crowd together again, saying, "Hear my words, all of you, and take them to heart. What truly contaminates a person is not what he puts into his body, but what comes out. That's what makes a person defiled."

Evil originates from inside a person. Coming out of a human heart are evil schemes, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, treachery, debauchery, jealousy, slander, arrogance, and recklessness. All these corrupt things emerge from within and constantly defile a person."

Reflection

Hymn Singing the Faith 508 Purify my heart

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=OfH9j-TLg3U>

Purify my heart, let me be as gold and precious silver.

Purify my heart, let me be as gold, pure gold.

Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire is to be holy, set apart for You Lord.

I choose to be holy, set apart for You my master, ready to do Your will.

Purify my heart, cleanse me from within and make me holy.

Purify my heart, cleanse me from my sin, deep within.

Chorus

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Reading James 1: 19 – 27

The Passion translation

My dearest brothers and sisters, take this to heart: Be quick to listen, but slow to speak. And be slow to become angry, for human anger is never a legitimate tool to promote God's righteous purpose. So this is why we abandon everything morally impure and all forms of wicked conduct. Instead, with a sensitive spirit we absorb God's Word, which has been implanted within our nature, for the Word of Life has power to continually deliver us.

Don't just listen to the Word of Truth and not respond to it, for that is the essence of self-deception. So always let his Word become like poetry written and fulfilled by your life!

If you listen to the Word and don't live out the message you hear, you become like the person who looks in the mirror of the Word to discover the reflection of his face in the beginning. You perceive how God sees you in the mirror of the Word, but then you go out and forget your divine origin. But those who set their gaze deeply into the perfecting law of liberty are fascinated by and respond to the truth they hear and are strengthened by it— they experience God's blessing in all that they do!

If someone believes they have a relationship with God but fails to guard his words then his heart is drifting away and his religion is shallow and empty. True spirituality that is pure in the eyes of our Father God is to make a difference in the lives of the orphans, and widows in their troubles, and to refuse to be corrupted by the world's values.

Reflection

Prayers for others

Hymn Singing the Faith 501

Help us, O Lord, to learn

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb5-0Rex6uM> (music only)

Help us, O Lord, to learn

Help us, O Lord, to live

the truths your word imparts,

the faith which we proclaim,

to study that your laws may be

that all our thoughts and words and deeds

inscribed upon our hearts.

may glorify your name.

Help us, O Lord, to teach
the beauty of your ways,
that all who seek may find the Christ
and make a life of praise.

William W Reid (Junior) (born 1923)

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The grace