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ORDINARY 34C

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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

As the darkness of winter draws in,
As the coldest time of the year approaches,
As people all over the country close their doors and turn up our heaters,
Come, Lord of light,
Come, God of the warm embrace,
Come to me, Immanuel, God with us,
Come and show me how to follow in the way of light,
Today and every day.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Readings: Luke 23:33-43 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

This scene is heartbreakingly familiar: Jesus, crucified between two criminals, suffering and exposed. It's one of the darkest moments in the Gospel story and yet, even here, there is light.

The crowd mocks him, the leaders sneer, even one of those crucified beside him joins in. But the other criminal does something different. He sees Jesus, not as a failed messiah or a public disgrace, but as someone innocent, someone holy. And he speaks words of remarkable trust: *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

Jesus replies with one of the most beautiful promises in all of Scripture: *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."*

For those of us on a journey of open-minded, inclusive discipleship, this moment is rich with meaning. First, it reminds us that grace is not earned. The criminal on the cross has no time to make amends, no way to prove his faith, no life left to devote to good works. All he can do is ask to be remembered. And that's enough.

Jesus doesn't demand a perfect confession. He doesn't interrogate or delay. He responds with immediacy, intimacy, and love.

This is the radical grace we follow, a grace that meets us not in our strength, but in our vulnerability. A grace that includes those on the margins. A grace that always makes room.

But this story also challenges us. Because we live in a world that often demands credentials, performance, and worthiness. It's tempting, even in the Church, to draw lines between who is in and who is out, who deserves mercy and who doesn't.

Jesus draws no such line. In fact, He spends his final breath welcoming someone others would have written off.

As disciples, we are called to do the same. To extend compassion without conditions. To see people not just by their past or their reputation, but by the image of God they carry within them.

So today, ask yourself:

- Who are the people I struggle to imagine being “remembered” by God?
- Where do I need to hear that I, too, am remembered and loved, just as I am?
- How can I live more fully into a discipleship that welcomes others, even when it costs something?

Even at the cross, Jesus is still doing what he always did: healing, including, forgiving, loving. That’s the kind of Messiah we follow. And that’s the kind of disciples we are called to be.

May you, and all around you, live as people of the cross, not defined by death, but by love that refuses to end.

Hymn:

548 STF – Blessed assurance – [YouTube](#)

Responding in prayer

On this Christ the King Sunday,
Will you pray to and with the most surprising of kings.

A king with thorns, rather than gold, for a crown
A king born not in a palace, but a manger
A king riding not on a noble steed, but on a donkey
A king who doesn’t look down, but sits alongside each and every one of us.

Christ, the King
Today, I am in your presence.

Christ the King,
Today I ask for your comforting hand upon the shoulders of all who are in distress
For siblings displaced by conflict, suffering the worst effects of climate change and separated from family
For those dealing with loneliness, anxiety, and facing the loss of a loved one
For those for whom the future feels particularly uncertain
For victims of all kinds of abuse, finding the strength to rebuild.

Christ the King,
Today I ask for your strength to be your hands and feet on the earth
Give me the heart that burns with your love
Be our guide as we seek to be your people of light
Help me never to give up hope.

Christ the King
Hear my prayers, I ask in Jesus’ name,
Amen.

Blessing

May you go from this place, inspired by this divine message of inclusivity.
May you go to welcome all people, to make space for all things,
May you go to do all that you can, in the name of love.
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 24th November

- Today is marked as international 'evolution day', because it marks the anniversary of the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species, which (contentiously at the time) made the case for evolution, and questioned the historical and scientific basis of the Creation Story in Genesis.
- It may seem a strange prayer-prompt, and perhaps one not everyone is comfortable with, but let us use today to pray for scientists and researchers everywhere who help explore the edge of knowledge, to help us learn and grow, and for the amazing ways in which science works together with faith.

Tuesday 25th November

- Today is celebrated as the 'feast day' for Issac Watts, the prolific hymn-writer and theologian, who died on 25th November 1748. He is recognised as the 'Godfather of English Hymnody' and many of his hymns are still sung today.
- You might like to spend the day researching or looking up an Issac Watts hymn or two, and using the words as a prayer or prayer prompt.
- If you are not sure where to start, 330 in Singing the Faith, Joy to the World, is a Watts classic!

Wednesday 26th November

- Today, why not use your meals as a trigger for prayer. Every time you sit down to eat, or prepare some food, or open the fridge – you could say a prayer of thanks to God for all the blessings you have in your life, and indeed for all those involved in growing, preparing and transporting food.

Thursday 27th November

- Today, let us pray for peace. It can feel difficult to pray for peace in a world where there is so much conflict and war. Spend some time offering thoughts of peace and comfort in place of all the negative news stories we hear about war.

Friday 28th November

- Hold a moment of stillness today,
And make some space to pray,
Not with words, but with silence,
And hear the Lord speaking to you.

Saturday 29th November

- Today is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, established by the UN in 1977. Amongst so much uncertainty, war and talk of genocide facing Palestinians today, let us pray for them and stand in solidarity in whatever ways we can.