

## MONDAY

4 JULY

Thomas the Apostle

Habakkuk 2:1-4

Psalm 31:1-6

Ephesians 2:19-end

John 20:24-29

## TUESDAY

5 JULY

Hosea 8:4-7. 11-13

Psalm 103:8-12

Matthew 9:32-end

## WEDNESDAY

6 JULY

Hosea 10:1-3. 7-8. 12

Psalm 115:3-10

Matthew 10:1-7

## THURSDAY

7 JULY

Hosea 11:1. 3-4. 8-9

Psalm 105:1-7

Matthew 10:7-15

## FRIDAY

8 JULY

Hosea 14:2-end

Psalm 80:1-7

Matthew 10:16-23

## SATURDAY

9 JULY

Isaiah 6:1-8

Psalm 51:1-7

Matthew 10:24-33

## REFLECTION

The pace of Jesus' life is frantic in the readings set for us this week in Matthew's Gospel. Healing after healing, crowd after crowd, questioner after questioner, people muttering in corners, people weeping in gratitude, people desperate for Jesus' attention – movement, drama, demands at every turn.

We are given two swift insights into Jesus' own reaction to what is going on. In Tuesday's reading Jesus feels compassion for the crowds, "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd". He sees the sheer scale of the work to be done – so much need, so few people to meet it.

In direct response to that, he sends his followers out to widen the scope of his work. Like him, they are to cast out spirits, heal people, and even raise people from the dead. But if the disciples felt excited at the thought of such a mission, Jesus' instructions must have sobered them a bit. To share Jesus' ministry is not just to wield power like his, but also to provoke hostility, as he does.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus,  
show us how you want us to continue your  
work on earth  
how we can heal,  
how we can be agents for change in the lives  
of your sons and daughters.  
We ask this in your name.



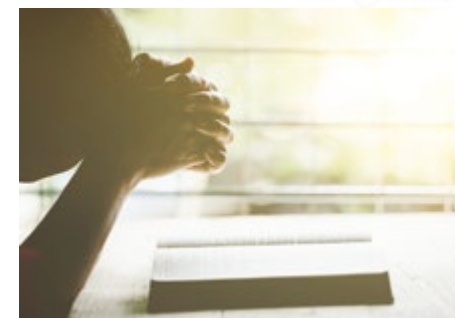
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## SHARED PRAYER

## PART IV – PRAYING AS A CHURCH THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Over the past few weeks we have been looking at shared prayer and today we are thinking about how we can pray together as a church throughout the week. Not everyone can make a mid-week prayer meeting, so here are a few other things to try:

- A prayer diary all church members can use. This can be a booklet of thirty-one pages, each page representing a different day of the month and headed "Day One", "Day Two", etc. On each page are written prayer suggestions covering areas such as individuals in your congregation, church activities, community organisations etc. As not every month has thirty-one days, it is best to keep the thirty-first page for more general prayer pointers such as thanking God for answered prayer; this avoids some individuals being prayed for more than others. A simpler alternative to a diary is to list a week's worth of prayer suggestions in the church notice sheet.
- A prayer chain. This is used for urgent prayer situations such as a sudden hospital admission. A group of people commit themselves to this ministry, one of whom acts as co-ordinator. Someone with a prayer request rings up the co-ordinator who, as well as promising to pray themselves, contacts the next person in the chain to pass on the message. That next person passes the message on too, so that very soon there are a number of people praying – a great comfort to someone in need.
- A prayer board. This is simply a board in church to pin prayer requests on either for ourselves or for someone else. If the request is for another, it is wise to ask that person's permission beforehand. People can be encouraged to look at the board regularly to see what needs praying for, or the requests can be compiled into a weekly list which is copied and made available to all in church so they can pray at home.



LIVE  
the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU  
THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by  
Caroline Hodgson  
and  
Heather Smith

Third week after Trinity

Monday 4 July to  
Saturday 9 July  
2022

WEEK

**MONDAY**  
**11 JULY**  
**Isaiah 1:11-17**  
**Psalm 50:7-15**  
**Matthew 10:34 – 11:1**

**TUESDAY**  
**12 JULY**  
**Isaiah 7:1-9**  
**Psalm 48:1-7**  
**Matthew 11:20-24**

**WEDNESDAY**  
**13 JULY**  
**Isaiah 10:5-7. 13-16**  
**Psalm 94:5-11**  
**Matthew 11:25-27**

**THURSDAY**  
**14 JULY**  
**Isaiah 26:7-9. 16-19**  
**Psalm 102:14-21**  
**Matthew 11:28-end**

**FRIDAY**  
**15 JULY**  
**Isaiah 38:1-6. 21-22. 7-8 [sic]**  
**Canticle: Isaiah 38:10-16**  
**or Psalm 32:1-8**  
**Matthew 12:1-8**

**SATURDAY**  
**16 JULY**  
**Micah 2:1-5**  
**Psalm 10:1-5a. 12**  
**Matthew 12:14-21**

## REFLECTION

At the heart of this week's Gospel readings is Jesus' promise of rest – the peace that the God who is "gentle and humble in heart" offers to share with the world, if it will only come to Jesus.



But this tender promise is surrounded by the violence of rejection. Jesus warns that this message of peace will provoke hatred and rejection, so that it might as well be a sword. He reproaches all the cities where he has performed miracles and yet where people have remained unmoved: Tyre and Sidon, who know nothing of God, would repent and accept Jesus' offer, but not his home country.

As if to prove the truth of that reproach, the religious leaders frown as Jesus and his followers eat the grain that God has provided to nourish God's children. Once again, instead of accepting God's generosity, people try to impose their own ideas.

With quiet irony, Matthew 12:18-21 quotes Isaiah 42:1-4. It's all there; God has always been the same; God has been telling his people for generations about the gentle and humble servant. Why do people hate and despise this servant so?

PRAYER

God of constancy,  
 we thank you for your offer of rest and peace.  
 We accept with grateful, humble hearts.  
 In the name of your son Jesus Christ.

## SHARED PRAYER

### PART V – PRAYING REMOTELY

Used with care and prayer, modern technology can be very helpful for church communities. Here are some suggestions:

- Set up a group of computer- and smartphone-savvy church members, to look at how technology can help your community in a meaningful way. This group can then help people use technology for themselves, either through training sessions or individual mentoring.
- Encourage those who have smartphones to find and download a Bible app on to their phones. There are all kinds of apps available, most of them free. You might want to recommend the Bible translation that you use in church.
- There are also all kinds of prayer and daily readings apps. Could you use any of these to keep people connected through the week?
- Keep in touch with parishioners who are unwell or who have difficulty attending church via one of the video conferencing programs, such as Skype, Facetime or Zoom. These can be used to hold prayer and Bible study meetings, to stream church services, or just to chat and stay connected.
- Create a group on one of the messaging apps – text, Facebook or WhatsApp. These can be used for administrative purposes – times of services, etc., and also to share prayers, Bible verses and more.
- Most churches have a website, many of them are out of date. Does yours need updating and managing? Is there someone with the energy and know-how to do it?
- Is there any way in which you could use technology as a means of outreach into your wider community? You could set up a prayer group on one of the messaging apps (see above), to enable people to get in touch when they need a prayer. You may want to set up a rota so that individuals take turns to monitor and respond to messages.

It's important to stress that many church communities manage perfectly well without any of the above! But if you have the enthusiasm and resources, technology can be a great way of staying connected.

# LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by  
 Caroline Hodgson  
 and  
 Heather Smith



Fourth week after  
 Trinity

Monday 11 July to  
 Saturday 16 July  
 2022

WEEK

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**MONDAY**  
**18 JULY**  
**Micah 6:1-4. 6-8**  
**Psalm 50:3-7. 14**  
**Matthew 12:38-42**

**TUESDAY**  
**19 JULY**  
**Micah 7:14-15. 18-20**  
**Psalm 85:1-7**  
**Matthew 12:46-end**

**WEDNESDAY**  
**20 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 1:1. 4-10**  
**Psalm 70**  
**Matthew 13:1-9**

**THURSDAY**  
**21 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 2:1-3. 7-8. 12-13**  
**Psalm 36:5-10**  
**Matthew 13:10-17**

**FRIDAY**  
**22 JULY**  
**Mary Magdalene**  
**Song of Solomon 3:1-4**  
**Psalm 42:1-10**  
**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**  
**John 20:1-2. 11-18**

**SATURDAY**  
**23 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 7:1-11**  
**Psalm 84:1-6**  
**Matthew 13:24-30**

## REFLECTION

Sometimes we're blinkered because we're so used to thinking in a certain way that alternative explanations pass us by, or we don't see what's before our very eyes. This week Jeremiah points out the failings that the people do not recognise in themselves, while the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew's Gospel want a sign, as if Jesus' words and actions are not enough. Jesus places himself in the context of the Old Testament story of Jonah, who spent three days in the belly of the sea monster. Jesus will spend three days in the earth, but will the scribes and Pharisees recognise the sign and make the connection when it happens?

Our readings from Matthew are interrupted on Friday by our commemoration of Mary Magdalene. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion about Mary over the years. Yet it was she who, after a few moments of confusion, was privileged to be the first to recognise the risen Christ.

Can we recognise the signs that God gives us, and see what is before our very eyes?

PRAYER

Lord God,  
 we ask for insight and discernment,  
 to recognise the signs you send  
 and the word you speak to us.  
 Remove our blinkers and open our hearts.  
 We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.



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## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

### PART I – WHO IS THE SNAKE?

A four-part series about evil by theologian and writer Dr Jane Williams.

The problem of evil is, intellectually speaking, a problem created by our doctrine of God. Christians say that there is only one God, that God is wholly good, that God is not forced to do anything, and that everything God makes is good. And that's why evil is such a conundrum. If there were lots of gods, they might have different strategies: some might be good, some bad. If God were weak, and other forces could dictate to God, then evil might not be God's fault. If God were powerful, but not necessarily wholly good, then God might have made a mixture of things, good and bad. But instead our understanding of creation leaves us with this conundrum about where evil comes from in a good world made by the only God, who is powerful and free and good.

Genesis does not directly address this question, but it does leave us with some intriguing insights. Genesis does not tell us where the crafty snake who questions the authority of God comes from; nor does it say, unambiguously, that this snake is evil: it is just devious. If Adam and Eve had been playing their part properly, and exercising the "dominion" that God gave them, they would not have been taken in by this creature. They were supposed to be in charge of the snake, not vice versa. So Genesis leaves us with this psychologically truthful situation: evil both is and is not our fault. We know, at the same time, that we ought to be able to control evil, and that we cannot. The snake tempts us, but we ought to know better than to listen.

But of course evil is not just an intriguing intellectual problem. It is painful and damaging beyond bearing. Genesis goes on to recount how God acts to curtail and overcome the damage done to the good world, through choosing a people who are helped to remember the true nature of God, and from whom will come God's Messiah.



LIVE  
 the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU  
 THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by  
 Caroline Hodgson  
 and  
 Heather Smith

Fifth week after Trinity

Monday 18 July to  
 Saturday 23 July  
 2022

WEEK

**MONDAY**  
**25 JULY**  
**James the Apostle**  
**Jeremiah 45:1-5**  
**or Acts 11:27 – 12:2**  
**Psalm 126**  
**Acts 11:27 – 12:2**  
**or 2 Corinthians**  
**4:7-15**  
**Matthew 20:20-28**

**TUESDAY**  
**26 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 14:17-  
 end**  
**Psalm 79:8-end**  
**Matthew 13:36-43**

**WEDNESDAY**  
**27 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 15:10.  
 16-end**  
**Psalm 59:1-4. 18-  
 end**  
**Matthew 13:44-46**

**THURSDAY**  
**28 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 18:1-6**  
**Psalm 146:1-5**  
**Matthew 13:47-53**

**FRIDAY**  
**29 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 26:1-9**  
**Psalm 69:4-10**  
**Matthew 13:54-end**

**SATURDAY**  
**30 JULY**  
**Jeremiah 26:11-  
 16. 24**  
**Psalm 69:14-20**  
**Matthew 14:1-12**

## REFLECTION

This week we spend some time in the company of a heartbreaking prophet. Jeremiah lived through the period in which

Jerusalem was conquered and the Temple destroyed, in 587 BC. But Jeremiah's great and painful burden was to speak God's words of warning and coming judgement in the years before this terrible catastrophe. Over and over again, Jeremiah brought his nation the warning of what was to come if they did not change their ways, but his prophecies were met with anger and derision.

In this week's readings Jeremiah is shown a faulty pot, which the potter simply reworks into another vessel. The people of Israel had come to assume that they were essential to God, and could afford to take liberties. But God reminds them that they are there to serve him, not the other way round.

Perhaps all of us who think of ourselves as God's people need to be reminded that we are called to shape our lives around God, not to take God for granted.

PRAYER

Lord God,  
 When we assume we are essential to you,  
 rework us to become the vessels you need us to be.  
 We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.



Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem. Brussels Cathedral. jorisvo / Shutterstock.com

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## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

### PART II – EARTHQUAKES AND VIRUSES

Theologian and writer Jane Williams continues her series about evil.

If you listen to some contemporary opponents of Christianity, you would think that no Christian before the twenty-first century had ever noticed that there was a problem about the existence of evil in a world made by a good and powerful God. But actually, of course, Christians have pondered this question for centuries. In the fourth century, Augustine of Hippo came up with a theory which has lots of strong points, though it may not be entirely convincing. Augustine argued that since everything that God made is good, there is no such thing as evil. Evil has no real existence. Instead, what we have are things that are, in themselves, good, but have got themselves into damaging relations with other good things, so that they start to hurt and distort each other, and the more this happens, the more the cracks in the goodness of the world begin to run through everything and wreck it. So Augustine's theory might suggest that an earthquake, for example, is morally neutral. It is only when there are people living in its path that it becomes "evil". Similarly with a virus: it isn't, in itself, "evil", but if it gets into a human being, it can be devastating.

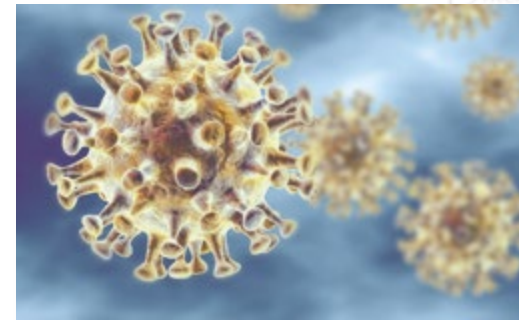
The strength of this idea is that it allows us to assert the genuine goodness of all that is made: if only we could keep out of the way of earthquakes and viruses, all would be well. Augustine was not suggesting that the results of evil are negligible. On the contrary, the damage done as created beings grind and destroy each other, as they get out of their proper relations with each other, is tragic. But Augustine held out the hope that because evil has no ultimate being, when everything is restored to its proper place in the kingdom of God, the wolf really will be able to lie down with the lamb, with neither contradicting its true nature.

Does that work, as a theory?

LIVE  
 the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU  
 THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by  
 Caroline Hodgson  
 and  
 Heather Smith



Sixth week after Trinity

Monday 25 July to  
 Saturday 30 July  
 2022

WEEK