

Resources for Parish Worship



We're still listening to the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel reading for this week, and it's a challenging message, especially in the light of the suffering and injustice of our world. Jesus calls us to faith, to trust in God's care for us. There is much in the world that would make such faith seem naive, misplaced or unrealistic. But, without such faith, how can we ever engage the big issues of our time. Unless we trust in

God's care, we will find ourselves becoming cynical and pessimistic, believing that the forces of injustice are being allowed free reign by God. We cannot permit ourselves to fall into this functional atheism, and so, however hard it may be to hear it, however foolish we may feel to preach it, we must do the work of nurturing faith.

May your faith be renewed and inspired as you worship this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Option B

Isaiah 49:8-16a: In response to the Servant Song of Isaiah 49:1-6, God speaks to the servant and promises the restoration, prosperity and security of

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Israel through him, calling the nation to rejoice and trust in God's love which is greater than a mother's.

Psalm 131: A Song of Ascent. The Psalmist enters worship with confidence in God's security, comfort and love, and exhorts the people of Israel to do the same.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5: Paul exhorts the church to avoid judging one another, or their 'leaders' and to leave the judgement to God, who alone knows the heart and will give praise as it is due.

Matthew 6:24-34: Jesus warns against serving money as a way to deal with our fears, and rather to trust in God's care and provision, seeking first God's reign and serving God alone.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%2049:%208-16a%0Acw%20Psalm%20131%20%0A1%20Corinthians%204:%201-5%0AMatthew%206:%2024-34

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord God,
who seest that we put not our trust
in any thing that we do;
Mercifully grant that by thy power
we may be defended against all adversity;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
Teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
reigns supreme over all things, now and for ever.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

The bidding for our prayers will be 'Lord in Your Mercy'... With the response 'Hear our Prayer'

Almighty, Everlasting and Creator God –

We come before you in prayer not because we are able by our own right, but because we know our need of God.

We come not because we are able by our own deeds, but because we are summoned in God's love.

We come in our need and hope. We come because of all that God has done.

We come in thanksgiving.

So we pray for this your world and it's peoples with all their needs, questions and longings.

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

We pray for the world wide Christian Church in all its wonderful diversity, bringing the elements of different cultures into their worship to and in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. Especially we pray for those churches who meet together in difficult and often dangerous circumstances. Let them know and feel your all abiding presence to both uphold their courage and strengthen their faith.

We pray for our own church here at and we bring before you all those who lead and inspire our worship, those who visit and pray for the sick and bereaved and those who carry out the maintenance and administration of a busy centre. For we are called to go out and preach the Good News to all that will hear - and so we pray for all areas of outreach to both young and old and whether formal or informal that many will respond to the call of Christ to follow him.

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

Lord, in this world which is a part of your creation, we struggle to understand the reasons behind the great natural disasters which mankind must endure; whether it be hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, or earthquakes

But we do understand that in the midst of such events your love is shown in the acts of bravery, selflessness and compassion which follow. We pray for all who suffer in such dreadful circumstances and for those who are tasked with

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rescue, providing the medical and community support and, eventually, in the long task of reconstruction.

We pray for the peoples of _____, that the days of tyranny will soon be over and that all weapons are laid down. We remember the many people who have been, and still are, caught up in that nation's turmoil that their ordeal will soon be over s.

We pray for all states where people feel oppressed and are denied a voice in their own destiny and ask that those in authority listen to their people and treat them with dignity and compassion.

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

Prayers for country and our society

As our nation struggles with economic uncertainty we pray for the power-less, the hope-less and all those for whom our Lord would have us care for most.

We pray for those who have to make the difficult spending decisions with reduced budgets knowing that all objectives and needs cannot be met.

As our young people return to schools and colleges after the break we remember that the society they grow up in and the attitudes that they form are in our hands. Lord help us to work towards a just and equitable society, built on the values that are inspired by people of faith, vision and commitment and not on those of expediency, glamour and greed.

We remember, as always, those who serve in our armed forces abroad and for those who wait at home for their safe return. We pray for the work of specialist medical staff caring for both physical and mental injuries.

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

And so we think now of those in most need in our own community, the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes, hospital and hospice and for the work and devotion of Carers whose skill and compassion bring both material and spiritual comfort at times of need.

Especially at this time when the professional care of the elderly is once more brought into the media's spotlight, we pray for those who must seek solutions in areas where deficiencies of that care have been found. And we pray that

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the compassionate care skills of old are not lost in a tangle of bureaucracy and regulation.

We also pray for those who feel the pain of grief at the loss of a loved one whether recent or as each anniversary passes. Help us to support all those who mourn both with our prayers, with words of comfort and with practical help both this day and in the days and weeks to come.

So now we share a moment of silence together as we bring before you those known only to ourselves and to you Lord. Let them feel your presence in their lives as we name them in our hearts and commit them to your loving care.
(A short period of silence)

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

And so we pray with confidence that –

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Lord God our Heavenly Father we come before you today in the greatness of your love and lift up our hearts in prayer and praise.

Help us to pray simply and sincerely, unselfishly and gratefully, remembering the needs of others as well as our own, and giving thanks always for everything in your name.

Lord we pray today for you church and for Christians in other lands where they are a minority let them find strength in knowing you are with them; where they are persecuted let them find courage to continue in faithful service, knowing that you will never leave them; where they are young in the faith let your Holy Spirit build them up in the knowledge of your love; where they are affluent and accepted keep them constant in service to you.

We pray for our church here at, for our ministers and we ask for your blessing to rest upon all who serve this Church. We are grateful for its worship and fellowship; for the care and teaching of children and young people; for its nurture and love

Help us to see the kind of church you need today and may we not lose sight of the many and varied needs of this neighbourhood.

Lord in your mercy

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Lord we pray for the leaders of all nations who carry a heavy burden of responsibility and we pray that all who offer their services in the leadership of the affairs of the world may have the wisdom and courage to uphold what is right for peace and for the survival of mankind.

We pray particularly at this time for peace in all countries of the world where violence, war and terrorism are taking place and we pray especially for those who seek to make peace in this divided world.

Lord, take from us all those fears that burden us and bring life to a standstill. Purify the minds and attitudes of those involved in bringing violence and terrorism to the world.

May we be alive to your vision for the world, without which society loses its direction and ignores your deep desire for us to live in peace and love for one another.

Lord in your mercy

Lord we bring to you our thanks and praise for the beauty of creation, and we pray that you would open our eyes to see all the beauty around us.

As the seasons change as Winter starts to give way to Spring help us to appreciate your greatness in giving us the different seasons, each one fulfilling our needs.

Help us to your safeguard your world so that our children and future generations will benefit from the natural beauty which you have created.

Lord in your mercy

Let us pray for those who are ill or in need of God's help at this time:
We pray for the sick, both at home and in hospital or hospice and of those awaiting consultations and treatments.

We think of the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes.

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And we pray for all those who minister to their needs, both from within the family and from the professional and voluntary services.

Let their care be as a continuation of that shown by Jesus who responded to the needs of all those who had faith.

Comfort and sustain those who are in need of your grace at this time and as we share a moment of silence together, we bring before you those known only to ourselves as we name them in our hearts and commit them to your loving care.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them.

Give to them the strong comfort which no one else can give, and let them know the comforting power of the resurrection of Jesus.

Today we especially pray for those who have lost loved ones in

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Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember before God those who have died and light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ, which eternally shines and brings hope.

Today we remember

You turn our darkness into light in your light shall we see light.

Lord in your mercy

Lord as we go out from church today, we give you thanks for our happy days, but you know the fears and anxieties that sometimes fill our hearts at what each day will bring.

Free us from panic and worry. Anchor our thoughts and minds in your great power and love and send us into each new day with your peace in our hearts and the sure confidence of your fatherly care.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

We will now say together....

POST COMMUNION

God our creator,

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by your gift the tree of life was set at the heart
of the earthly paradise,
and the Bread of life at the heart of your Church.
May we who have been nourished at your table on earth
be transformed by the glory of the Saviour's Cross
and enjoy the delights of eternity;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

God of tender care, like a mother, like a father, you never forget your children,
and you know already what we need. In all our anxiety give us trusting and
faithful hearts, that in confidence we may embody the peace and justice of
your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Dear Lord, help us to trust in your wisdom that nothing is forgotten. Give us
strength to meet the events of our lives believing that in you all will be well.
Help us to surrender our anxiety so that our spirits might have ease and be at
peace. Amen.

Perfect Light of revelation,
as you shone in the life of Jesus,
whose epiphany we celebrate,
so shine in us and through us,
that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

O God,
you spoke your word
and revealed your good news in Jesus, the Christ.
Fill all creation with that word again,
so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations
and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,
we may become one living body,
your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen.

To God who welcomes all in love,
let us pray for the good of the church
and the concerns of those in need.
God of every land and nation,
you have created all people
and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.
Listen to the cries of those who pray to you,

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and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name,
all people will know the power of love at work in the world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,
let us lift our hearts in faith
to the one who hears all prayers
and holds close all those in need.
Holy God, you gather the whole universe
into your radiant presence
and continually reveal your Son as our Savior.
Bring healing to all wounds,
make whole all that is broken,
speak truth to all illusion,
and shed light in every darkness,
that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

God of tender care,
like a mother you never forget your children,
but comfort and quiet those who are restless and fearful;
like a father you know already what we need.
In all our anxiety, give us the spirit of trust;
in all our worry, give us faithful hearts;
that in confidence and calm
we may seek the kingdom of Christ
where your holy will of peace and justice
has been made known. Amen.

'And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.' (1 Corinthians 3:23)

When we are living,
we are in the Lord,
and when we're dying,
we are in the Lord.
For in our living
and in our dying,
we belong to God,
we belong to God.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The word “faith” has at times been used in painful and confusing ways. People who are not healed are accused of not having enough faith. Those who do not have enough food or money are encouraged to have faith, and if they get afraid or stressed they are chastised for their lack of faith. In some cases, faith is seen as a magic attitude that can ensure health, wealth and happiness, if we just have enough of it. As a result, the idea of faith – of trusting God to provide and care for us – has often been thrown out in thoughtful faith circles. However, the idea of trusting God is the heart of this week’s Lectionary readings. God promises the Servant that Israel will be restored and that God’s care is more reliable than a mother’s. The Psalmist affirms his faith in God’s care, and calls his people to join him in faith. Jesus, in a much misunderstood section of the Sermon on the Mount, calls his followers to trust God and not chase after money. In this context, Paul’s words in Corinthians may seem out of place. However, perhaps it is Paul that gives us the key this week, because he is also speaking about faith – about trusting God. But this time, it is trusting God to know our hearts truly and to give us the praise we are due when we need it. This is the image of the parent celebrating the child’s achievements and growth, no matter how humble they may be. This is the image of the parent who will sometimes allow the child to struggle in order that they may find their own strength, wisdom and way in the world – much like the Psalmist’s image of the “weaned child” (as opposed to the much more dependent “nursing infant”). When all of these passages are held together we discover that the Scriptures do not guarantee us a care-free, prosperous life. But they do promise that as we seek God’s reign, we will find the strength, encouragement, inner resources and sense of comfort and peace that we need to face whatever joys or struggles life throws at us.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: Where does faith in God’s care and provision fit into a world of injustice, suffering and gross inequality? How we deal with the reality that it is often those who live in affluent countries or circumstances who most claim that God provides for them? What can it mean to engage in the work of justice, while believing that God does care and does provide? These are some of the tough questions that sometimes drive justice-oriented believers to cynicism and functional atheism. It’s hard to believe in a God who actively provides for God’s children when faced with dire poverty, life-threatening diseases that afflict poor communities more than wealthy ones (or where lives wouldn’t be threatened if there was money to buy necessary medicines – like AIDS and TB) and the seeming prosperity of those who perpetuate injustice while the poor continue to suffer and die. However, it is

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the very concern for others that drives us to seek justice that is evidence of God's care. It is our capacity to "seek first God's kingdom" that reveals God's quest for justice and goodness to prevail. The key, though, is to move away from the God-limiting idea that God must "supernaturally" intervene to make a difference and begin to embrace the call to both trust God, and be agents of God's care. The trust comes in what Evolutionary Christians (www.evolutionarychristianity.com) call evolution's God-given "trajectory of compassion" – that the universe is becoming ever more compassionate and gracious as it evolves. The call to be agents of justice and grace – to seek first God's reign – is fueled by the faith and hope that this insight brings, and is expressed in our ongoing, unswerving commitment to participate in social movements and political processes, and through small daily lifestyle changes and acts of justice that make small but significant contributions to healing and justice.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In our communities we will inevitably have those who claim that God provides for them every time – from money to parking spaces to protection from harm or trauma. But, equally, we will have those who have not experienced such "provision" – who have been harmed or traumatised, who struggle to make ends meet through no fault of their own, or who face sickness, unfortunate accidents or unexpected, bad life changes. How do we reconcile these two groups? How do we affirm God's care, without leaving those who are suffering feeling unloved and rejected by God? How do we recognise life's struggles without undermining the faith of those who believe they experience God's care? Perhaps the answer is to begin to embrace a different understanding of God and of God's care. Rather than a deist view in which God waits outside of our world, swooping in to save or help us, we can present a God who is within and among us, involved in the processes of creation and growth and chaos and life and death. Rather than a faith that requires God to meet every need, or 'answer' the details of our lives in order to protect us from suffering, we can present a God who works with us and within us no matter what we may face, giving us strength, courage, and grace to navigate the inevitable pain and chaos that must exist in any creative universe. In this view, then, we avoid the equal and opposite errors of believing that we must "serve money" and look after ourselves without any thought that God will help us, and of thinking that God will do it all for us and we have nothing to do but to trust and wait for God's provision to magically appear. Rather, we begin to recognise that we have the awesome responsibility and privilege of working to contribute to God's reign even while we engage in the usual tasks of providing for ourselves and our families. We are able to avoid making money an end in itself, and we can commit to the "higher purpose" of God's reign, God's justice and God's compassion (which

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means recognising that we may often be called on to be God's provision for someone else). But, we can also avoid becoming "too heavenly minded to be any earthly good", trusting God's guidance and care, while working however we may to make a life in the world for ourselves, and for others in our circles of influence.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

Jesus tells his followers that they cannot serve God and pursue material wealth at the same time. It is worth remembering that only about 5-10% of the people of ancient Israel had much wealth, these few were very wealthy indeed -- rich beyond belief. They were aristocratic families, many of whom were of Greek or Roman background, who had received their property through military conquest--the plunder of war. These rich families were very rich, and constituted perhaps 2-3% of the people, at most. There was a big drop-off to the next level, which would have included the major tax collectors, and those who held high positions with the major landowners. The priests and scribes in Jerusalem, while not necessarily rich in terms of assets (though some were), nevertheless lived in palatial splendour. As the tax collectors were political oppressors, the priests and scribes were religious oppressors. The people caught it from both sides. Their political oppression was being supported by their religious leaders. Everybody else was poor and operated at a bare subsistence level. This calls into question most traditional interpretations, as if Jesus were giving poor people a lecture on how they ought to get better at handling their money. In fact, his listeners would likely have agreed with Jesus that "you are not able to serve God and mammon." With the various taxes they paid approaching 50% of their already meagre income, they regarded their economic superiors as rapacious and obviously following mammon more than God. They didn't think too much of those who lived high at the peoples' expense, while the people themselves were near starvation.

These ten verses contain six injunctions not to worry. With "mammon" as our "treasure," we'll never have a moment's rest. We'll always be worrying about holding on to what we have or trying to get more.

The great Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, once defined anxiety as "the next day." We don't know what will happen "the next day," which creates anxiety this day. Therefore, we are consumed on this day with trying to anticipate future calamities against which to protect ourselves. Since there is no end to the calamities we can anticipate, we're always uncertain and constantly chasing after something which, we hope, will decrease our level of uncertainty. This never works. Acquiring things doesn't reduce anxiety. It

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generates anxiety. You buy some kind of insurance to protect you against some kind of risk, which means that you now have one more bill to worry about paying!

Discipleship frees us to trust in the only true Giver and Sustainer of life. The coming kingdom already shapes the present life of the disciple. His God grants a higher security even in the midst of his trials. Free from anxiety, the disciple is free from confused priorities: one's life and body are the main gifts from God; food and clothing are just means to an end.

Food and clothing are important. Jesus does not discount the peoples' needs. In fact, he says that their physical needs are known and understood by God: "For your heavenly Father knows that you need quite all of these." However Jesus goes further. Not only does he reject anxiety about wealth, he rejects the entire premises of the established market system. Not only can you not serve God and mammon, do not be bothered by the whole mechanism of getting things.

"For this reason, I say to you, do not be anxious for your life (psyche)." Psyche means "life" or "soul," or, even better, "the essence of life," or "true life." (We get our word "psychology" from psyche.) Despite your very real needs, true life is not about food, or drink, or clothes. True life comes first through the kingdom, the earthly application of which would mean food and clothing for everyone.

This has nothing to do with soothing the anxieties of affluence. It has nothing to do with counselling modern people to keep their obsession with wealth in better perspective and urging them to be better Christians in their application of it--not that that's a bad idea necessarily, only that Jesus has much bigger things on his mind than that. It has to do with disconnecting from a hierarchical system which generates anxiety and worry in the first place. The rich, currently on top, can't take it with them--nor perhaps even keep it while they're here.

Jesus mentions clothes because they were the outward mark of social rank. This is true today as well, of course, but it was really true then. The wealthy, including priests and scribes connected with the Temple establishment, were easily identified by their glitzy robes. Jesus attacks fancy clothes more than once. In 11:8, he talks about "those who wear soft robes...in royal palaces." It wasn't a compliment there, and it isn't here either. This is a barbed reminder

of the high social rank of their overlords.

The crops of the field are nourished by God, raised up in God's field--"how they grow"!--and gathered in to make daily bread for the life of the world. How much more you! Like the crops of the field, which God raises, processes and distributes, those who follow the way of the kingdom also lose their own life for the life of the world.

Then Jesus tells how the disciple is to live "But seek first the kingdom, and its justice, and all these things will be added to you." *Dikaiosyne* may be translated "righteousness" or "justice." Translating as "righteousness" sometimes means that we think in terms of personal morality. The context makes clear that Jesus' concern is more social justice than individual sanctity. Indeed, this is nearly always the case. This is an imperative that we ignore at our peril. There are several places in the Bible where God rejects the worship of his people because they lack justice (eg. Micah 6:6-8; 1 Tim. 6:9-10, 17; Matt. 6:19-21), but there is nowhere in the Bible where God rejects the justice of his people because they lack worship. Does this mean that social, political and economic justice are more important to God than worship? Possibly it does, what is most certainly does mean is that worship which doesn't grow out of justice is worth nothing.

SERMON OUTLINE

Matthew 6:24-34

No one can serve two masters

beautiful passage - from Sermon on the Mount - reflects J's love of nature - appreciation of Creation - handiwork of the Father.. He emphasises an important truth - *no man can serve 2 masters* – you can't have spilt loyalties.. The main conflict of loyalties focuses on material treasure in a materialistic world - *you cannot serve God & wealth...*

Serving God is the perfect antidote for worry - *do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.* Learn from Nature....

1. The Flocks of birds 26: *Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, & yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? YES! Cf 10.29: are not 2 sparrows sold for a penny? You are worth more*

2. The Flowers of the field 28f: *Why do you worry about clothing. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29yet I tell you,*

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even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today & tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you?

3. The Faith of the individual: *do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" 31 Trust in God to provide - your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. v27 Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? NO! It will only shorten your life! Instead simply trust! 33 strive first for the kingdom of God & his righteousness, & all these things will be given to you as well. 34 'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. By Norman Porteus*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Isaiah 49: 8-16

Marks of indelible grace - a Mennonite sermon from Canada

<http://www.ottawamennonite.ca/sermons/tattoo.htm>

The Text this Week - source site

<http://www.textweek.com/prophets/isaiah49b.htm>

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

The Text this Week - source site

<http://www.textweek.com/pauline/1cor4.htm>

Matthew 6:24-34

Get Your Thinking Right!

Jesus had a unique way of teaching and using his surroundings to illustrate his point. He could then bring those who were listening more in line with his teachings. In this passage that I read today, if you use your imagination you can see that it is spring time in the Galilee. Jesus had no rows of chairs to set up or a podium from which to preach. So he walks among the crowd as they sat on the ground and listened. His eye contact would seek out the people's faces. He would lift up some seemingly unimportant illustration and from the locale and expound on it.

http://day1.org/2691-get_your_thinking_right

The Text this Week

<http://www.textweek.com/mtlk/matt6b.htm>

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Consider the lilies. Sermons from Seattle site. Those with Powerpoint will be tempted.

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_b_thanksgiving.htm

CHILDREN

Site of lessons on the sermon on the mount.

<http://mssscrafts.com/newtestament/sermononmount.htm>

Holly's Worry

[http://www.sermonsuite.com/content.php?
i=788017202&key=okSt5lmMmakzvbw6](http://www.sermonsuite.com/content.php?i=788017202&key=okSt5lmMmakzvbw6)

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[In Heavenly Love Abiding](#)

[Trust And Obey](#)

[Blessed Assurance](#)

[Come Thou Fount Of Every Blessing](#)

[My Hope Is Built](#)

[Blessed Be Your Name](#) (*Link to YouTube video. Note: You may prefer to leave the bridge out of this song.*)

[Your Grace Is Enough](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

You Are: [Chord Chart](#); [Mp3 Download](#)

[I Believe That God Appeared In Human Form](#) (*Tune is the famous "I believe for every drop of rain that falls"*)

[Seek Ye First](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)