

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Resources for worship

The Queen has reigned over us for 70 years, and has won the respect and affection not only of her subjects in the UK, but of people all over the world. Her life and work have been shaped by her deep Christian faith, and we've created some resources for churches wanting to mark her Platinum Jubilee as part of a service of worship.

Suggested readings

Psalm 1; Psalm 15; Psalm 16; Psalm 21.1–7, 13; Psalm 23

Prayer of thanksgiving

God our Father, we thank you
for the long reign and faithful service
of our beloved Queen Elizabeth.
Thank you that she has willingly accepted the burdens of monarchy,
and borne them for 70 years without failing.

Thank you for her sense of duty,
and for her willingness to put others before herself;
for her ability to say the right word at the right time
and to reach out in forgiveness and reconciliation,
making enemies into friends.

Thank you for her quiet wisdom;
the love she has shared with her family;
her grace under pressure;
for all she has meant to this nation, and to other nations too.

Bless her, we pray, with the knowledge
that she has been a good and faithful servant to her country
and most of all,
a good and faithful servant to you.
Amen.

Prayer for our nation

God our Father, as we give thanks for 70 years of service by The Queen, we pray too for the land that she loves and which has been her life's work.

Where there is anger and division, we ask for healing. We pray that we might seek understanding together, and that when we disagree we will learn to do so with kindness and respect.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Where there is poverty and want, we ask for provision. We thank you for the vision of plenty in Scripture, where all sit together at the great banquet, and we acknowledge the wrongness of some having too much while others don't have enough. Help us to be part of making your world right, we pray.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Where there is oppression, we ask for justice. We thank you for good laws and strong institutions; and we pray for those who uphold these laws and protect the innocent. We pray too for those who suffer injustice, perhaps because they can't defend themselves against people who do evil, or just because of who they are. 'Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked', we pray.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Where there is spiritual darkness, we pray for the light of Christ to shine. We thank you for the faithful witness of Christians down the years to the love of Jesus and the truth of Scripture. We thank you for the faith of The Queen, and for all the ways you have guided and blessed her throughout her long life. We pray that many will see her good works and glorify you because of them; and we pray that you will draw many in this nation to yourself.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Sermon study: The Good Samaritan

The parable of the Good Samaritan is found in Luke 10.25–37. The Queen has referred to it often as an example of service to others.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is told in answer to a question by an 'expert in the law' who wanted to test Jesus and asked him, 'Who is my neighbour?' It is a very rich story, and it's possible to read it in different ways. These are some suggestions which could be expanded as appropriate.

1. It's a simple story of compassion – a man reaches out and helps someone just because he needs help, not because he owes him anything or hopes to gain anything. At this level, it's about making connections with people simply as fellow human beings.

In Malachi 2.10 the prophet asks, 'Don't we all have the same father? Didn't the same God create us all?' (GNB). In Genesis 4, Cain – dismissing any idea of responsibility after the murder of Abel – asks, 'Am I supposed to take care of my brother?' (verse 9). The implication of the story is, 'Yes, you are.' The Good Samaritan does what he does out of common humanity.

2. It's a story of the crossing of boundaries. Jews and Samaritans had a long and complicated history, which by the time of Jesus was characterised by deep hostility and mutual violence. In Matthew 10.5 he tells his disciples not to enter any Samaritan town, perhaps because it was too dangerous. The Good Samaritan's action was not only counter-intuitive, but also very brave – Jesus' listeners would know he ran a real risk of being blamed for the attack.

Today, there are deep international and inter-communal divisions. There are culture wars that pit people against each other on ideological grounds. Jesus' story is profoundly challenging, inviting us to cross boundaries as well.

3. It's a critique of bad religion. It's significant that it was a priest and a Levite – a hereditary temple servant – who feature in the story. The injured man might have been dead, and touching him might have made them

ritually unclean. It isn't quite fair to see them as villains, though – it's likely that the story was told in part to highlight a real question about which part of the law took precedence, ritual purity or duty to a neighbour. Jesus does, though, come down clearly on one side.

So the story might make us ask questions about how our faith makes us behave. Are we more worried about keeping rules than helping other people? If our faith makes us worse human beings, we're getting our faith wrong, Jesus seems to say.

4. It's a radical reinterpretation of responsibility. Martin Luther King used the parable in a famous sermon, stressing the dangers of the road and the risks run by the priest and the Levite. 'And so the first question that the priest asked – the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"'

The lawyer's original question, 'Who is my neighbour?' seeks to establish the limits of his responsibility, or the boundaries of his clan. Jesus' answer focuses on heart and character. He won't allow us to escape the real question, which is about how we ourselves will behave. We are to be neighbours to people who need neighbours – whether they are neighbours or not.

5. It's an invitation to generosity. There's an irony built in to the story: it's the Samaritan who behaves rightly, when the people of God do not. He is one of those who, in Paul's words, 'do by instinct what the Law commands' (Romans 2.14).

So at this level, the story invites us to learn from and celebrate those who might be outside our own circles of belief and practice, but who nevertheless act in ways that show that their hearts are in tune with God's heart.

6. It leads us to Jesus. It wouldn't be true to say that Jesus told the story as a reference to his own mission and character; that isn't the context, though some of the early Church fathers read it in that allegorical way.

But perhaps we can see ourselves in the person of the man who was beaten and bruised, and left to suffer alone; and perhaps we can see Jesus in the person of the rescuer who risked everything in a costly act of grace.

Quotes

'The two lessons that [Jesus] had for us, which he underlined in everything he said and did, are the messages of God's love and how essential it is that we, too, should love other people. There are many serious and threatening problems in this country and in the world but they will never be solved until there is peace in our homes and love in our hearts.' (1986)

'For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example.' (2000)

'At the heart of our faith stand not a preoccupation with our own welfare and comfort but the concepts of service and of sacrifice as shown in the life and teachings of the one who made himself nothing, taking the very form of a servant.' (2010)

'The implication drawn by Jesus is clear. Everyone is our neighbour, no matter what race, creed or colour. The need to look after a fellow human being is far more important than any cultural or religious differences.' (2004, referring to the Good Samaritan.)

'Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.' (2011, the year of a visit to Ireland.)

'Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God.' (On the presentation to her of a Bible during her Coronation service.)