

St Thomas Methodist Church, Exeter

September 2025

Weekly Worship Resources

You are invited each week to offer prayers for others, and speak aloud, or think about, the words of the Lord's Prayer ...

Prayers of intercession

Hold before God in love, the people of the world: ...

Hold before God in love, the people of this country: ...

Hold before God in love, the people of your own community, your family and friends. Name those known to you who are in any need at this time ...

Loving God, help me to act with love and kindness to everyone. Give me strength to be bold to stand up for others. Shine your light through my life, especially when I need to act differently to the people around me. Help me to encourage others, and bless me to be a blessing to them. Amen

Lord's Prayer [modern form]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

07 September – The cost of following Jesus

In his shortest and most personal letter, Paul writes to a slave-owning Christian, Philemon, on behalf of Onesimus, his runaway slave who has also become a Christian and is a valued helper to Paul. The letter is a challenge to Philemon to count the cost of following Jesus, either by taking Onesimus back or releasing him for Christ's service. This week we consider the cost of following Jesus in our daily lives and how doing so makes us stand out from the crowd.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 18 Year C

Deuteronomy 30.15-20; Psalm 1; **Philemon 1-21**; Luke 14.25-33

Philemon [NRSVA]

Salutation

¹Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, ²to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God

⁵because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus. ⁶I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. ⁷I

have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

⁸For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, ⁹yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love – and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. ¹⁰I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. ¹¹Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. ¹²I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. ¹³I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during

my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. ¹⁵ Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother – especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²² One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

Final Greetings and Benediction

²³ Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



Thought for the week

The cost of following Jesus can come in many forms. In the UK, we have freedom to worship God in safety, yet, for others around the world, worshipping God means risking their lives. Although we have freedom of worship, following Jesus in our society still has a cost. It

may be a financial cost, as we give sacrificially to support the church, its mission and charities. But there is also the cost involved in how we live our lives, the daily decisions that we make, to ensure that our thinking aligns with what Jesus would want from us.

Following Jesus means that we might take decisions that make us stand out from the crowd. For example, we are called to treat everyone the same, to be loving and kind, forgiving and generous – not just to our friends and colleagues but to everyone we meet.

Philemon had a decision to make about his runaway slave, Onesimus, who had become a Christian and a valued helper of Paul. Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a brother in Christ. What should Philemon do? He has every right within the laws governing slave ownership to toss the letter away and set Onesimus to work. Yet Paul reminds Philemon that he was the one who led him to Jesus – the implication seems to be that therefore Philemon should do as Paul asks. A simple decision, you might think, but Philemon has great authority in the area, as a well-known and respected landowner who opens his house for people to come and worship God. If he accepts Onesimus back as a brother, in a time where slavery was normal, what would his neighbours and friends think? They might think he is weak, incapable or soft. He could lose status in his community.

There is another potential risk that Philemon's other slaves might decide to convert to Christ in order to gain their freedom. So perhaps it isn't a simple decision at all. We can only guess that, as the letter still exists, Philemon did indeed accept Onesimus back as a brother. We are left wondering what the repercussions were for him.

Following Jesus is a journey of trying to live more and more as he would want. Yes, we aren't perfect, and we will get it wrong, but we are forgiven, and we can keep trying. We might make decisions that make us stand out from the crowd; we might risk losing our status with family, friends, and colleagues; we might be laughed at or mocked. Are we prepared for the cost of following Jesus?

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

We praise you, O God, for creating us as your children, and we thank you for sending Jesus when we had lost our way.

We praise you, Lord Jesus, for coming as one of us, and for calling us your brothers and sisters.

We praise you, Holy Spirit, for comforting and challenging us, and we thank you for your counsel when we need it most. Amen

14 September – Worth finding

Paul thanks God for his favour and mercy by calling him to ministry despite being the worst sinner of all. If God can change Paul's life, he can change anyone's.

Both the Epistle and Gospel readings this week speak of the lost being sought and found. We have a God who loves to seek out the lost because we are worth finding – a cause for celebration!

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 19 Year C

Exodus 32.7-14; Psalm 51.1-10; **1 Timothy 1.12-17**; Luke 15.1-10

1 Timothy 1:12-17 [NRSVA]

Gratitude for Mercy

¹²I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service,

¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.



Thought for the week

The author of 1 Timothy (probably not Paul but someone writing in his name after his death) was aware of his transgressions, which he lists: a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violent man. I wonder what personal failings we might write down if we were being as honest. The passage highlights the fact that even though he got it wrong and missed the mark, God still found and trusted him. There is a parallel with the story of the lost sheep in the Gospel reading. Both the person and the sheep were lost and far from God, but both are found and brought back into the loving arms of God and the shepherd.

Perhaps, like the woman with the lost coin, you have experienced that feeling of losing something? You search frantically, looking in the same places two or three times, trying to remember where you last saw it, but to no avail. Then it turns up in the least likely place! You've no idea how it got there, but it doesn't matter as you are filled with a glorious feeling of relief that something you thought had gone forever has been found. A celebration is surely in order! When the lost sheep is found the shepherd calls to his neighbours 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep'. The woman who finds her lost coin calls her neighbours round for a party. There is also a celebration in the 1 Timothy reading, in verse 17: 'To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

In the 1 Timothy passage, verse 15, is an often-quoted truth, that 'Jesus came into the world to save sinners'. The word 'sinner'

suggests that we have been really bad, but, in reality, a better translation would be that we have missed the mark, we have fallen short; we are missing out on who we are meant to be. Jesus came into the world so that everyone could be the people God intended for them to be – this is the Good News: no matter who we are, we are loved and valued by God and God wants the best for our lives.

God is searching for us all. Have we responded fully to God's love? The Gospel reading assures us that when we do, the angels in heaven celebrate too (Luke 15:7).

A prayer of adoration

Almighty God, your mercy and love know no bounds, reaching from heaven to find us.

Lord Jesus, your compassion and grace know no bounds, opening your arms to welcome us.

Holy Spirit, your comfort and counsel know no bounds, enfolding us in the fullness of fellowship.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship and adore you. Amen

21 September – Get real!

Timothy is urged to instruct the church in Ephesus to pray for all people, especially rulers and those in authority, so that all might live godly lives in peace. Paul reminds Timothy that Jesus is the one mediator between God and humankind, and that Paul was chosen to be the bearer of this good news to the Gentiles.

1 Timothy addresses Christians grappling with the issues of living faithfully for Christ in the world. On this United Nations International Day of Peace, he encourages prayer for everyone, especially for those in power and authority, that they may govern wisely so that everyone may live in peace. In the Gospel reading, Jesus points out that we need to be wise in our use of money.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 20 Year C

Amos 8.4-7; Psalm 113; **1 Timothy 2.1-7**; Luke 16.1-13

Instructions concerning Prayer

2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶who gave himself a ransom for all – this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.



Thought for the week

In the board game Monopoly™, players try to buy and develop as many properties as possible. To own all the properties in the same set and then to put hotels on them is the best way to win, as this maximises the rent opponents must pay when they land on your space. The winner is the richest person at the end of the game, basically the one who has made everyone else bankrupt. Ironically, Monopoly™ is based on something called the ‘Landlord’s Game’ devised by Lizzie G. Magie in 1904. Lizzie’s game did not involve the concept of a monopoly; instead, she wanted to highlight the potential exploitation of tenants by greedy landlords. Magie had squares that would help remedy this exploitation, like a single tax on property owners. Today, Monopoly™ still includes the ‘buildings tax card’ to try and help those not doing quite so well in the game.

Monopoly is a great illustration for today's Gospel reading. In the game, you look out for number one and make decisions that will increase your bank balance and help you to win. In the Gospel reading, the manager was taking money that wasn't his to increase his bank balance and then, when he thought he might lose everything, he reduced the debts of those who owed money to his master, so that they would feel duty bound to be nice to him when he lost his job.

Often in parables you can imagine God as one of the characters, but not in this one! Jesus does not condone this behaviour. We need to be trusted to make good and right decisions with our money as this directly affects our spiritual life. We can't say that we love and serve Jesus and then do dishonest things. Jesus says, 'whoever can be trusted with small things can also be trusted with big things'. (*ERV: Holy Bible Easy-to-Read Version*). Can you be trusted?

In the reading from 1 Timothy, we are urged to pray for all those in power and authority, so we might live peaceable and godly lives. Since the banking crash of 2007-2008, there has perhaps been a lack of trust in those working in the banking system and financial institutions. Yet we are encouraged here to pray for *all* those in power. How often do we as a church pray for those people? Can we pray more for them?

A prayer of confession

Lord, we confess that we find it difficult to live as Christians in the world.

Every day, we must make our way through a minefield of decisions and choices.

We confess that so often we choose the easiest option, or the best one for us personally; but these decisions may not serve you or your world.

We repent of giving in to our sinful natures out of greed, ease or sheer thoughtlessness, and we commit ourselves to prayerfully reviewing our dealings in the world in the light of your teachings, and the way you call us to live.

Assurance of forgiveness

The world is not forgiving, Lord, but you are.

The world will trick and deceive us, but you will never leave us.

Thank you for your forgiveness when we fall into worldly ways, giving credence to that which is corrupt.

Thank you for your forgiveness when we fail to live according to your calling.

We recommit ourselves today to trying harder. Amen

28 September – Treasuring generosity

The final chapter of Timothy focuses on where real contentment is to be found – not in the pursuit of worldly wealth but in godly living. True riches come from God and should be shared generously. Timothy is urged to treasure what will endure and, above all, to fight the good fight of faith.

Today we are looking at how we are God's treasure, and given gifts, skills and abilities to share with others. Are we generous in how we use them?

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 21 Year C

Amos 6.1a, 4-7; Psalm 146; **1 Timothy 6.6-19**; Luke 16.19-31

1 Timothy 6:6-19 [NRSVA]

⁶Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

The Good Fight of Faith

¹¹But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of

the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will bring about at the right time – he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.



Thought for the week: True wealth

Perhaps you have a bit of money, not lots, just some that you have saved. Perhaps you have invested in stocks and shares – the balance goes up and down but hopefully in a general upward trajectory. You might not consider yourself wealthy in monetary terms but have enough so that you can plan and save for big purchases. If that's the case, you would be considered wealthier than many other people. In fact, in monetary terms most people in the Western world who

compared themselves with someone in the developing world would be considered very wealthy indeed.

But we are already wealthy! We are rolling in it – our wealth is so abundant that we can give it away freely. You have probably guessed I am not talking about financial equity. We didn't bring any money into the world with us and we can't take it out with us – that is not where our wealth lies. Rather, our wealth lies in the knowledge that by grace we are saved. We can't do anything to make God love us more and nothing we do can make God love us less. This knowledge brings us freedom, peace, joy and contentment. This knowledge helps us to spend our monetary wealth in ways that please God, and helps us to share the skills and abilities we have in a generous way. This is true wealth.

A sending out prayer

Lord, you are so generous to us.

As we think about the week ahead, guide us to serve you and others by sharing the treasures we have been given.

Help us to be grateful when others are generous to us. Amen

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