

St Thomas Methodist Church, Exeter

November 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

God of all hope, your people lift before you the world: communities living in warfare and conflict ...; communities living with injustice ...; communities suffering from the effects of natural disasters and the climate crisis ...:

God of all hope, your people lift before you this country: communities living in tension and uncertainty ...; families living with the shadow of domestic violence and abuse ...; people struggling with daily life; facing tough situations that demand difficult decisions ...:

God of all hope, your people lift before you our community, our family and friends. We name those known to us and acknowledge those known only to God who are in any kind of need at this time,

As I sit quietly before God, who loves me and knows my joys and sorrows, my gifts and challenges, I ask his blessing for the week ahead ...

God of all hope, who frames faith with loving freedom, I put myself into your hands and pray that you will bless me to be a blessing to others. 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

02 November – Celebrating God at work

Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica, giving thanks for its growth in faith and the community's love for one another, despite the persecutions they endure. He assures them of his constant prayers that they will continue to act out their faith and show themselves worthy of God's calling.

In his second letter to the church in Thessalonica, Paul praises God at work in their lives, which he is not ashamed to boast about to other churches. When Zacchaeus meets Jesus, he is changed from a thief to a generous benefactor, a life worth celebrating. Today we celebrate each other and how God is working among us.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 26 Year C

Isaiah 1.10-18; Psalm 32.1-7; **2 Thessalonians 1.1-4, 11-12**; Luke 19.1-10

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4; 11-12 [NIV]

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

² Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

³We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. ⁴Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

¹¹With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. ¹²We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.



Thought for the week

Boasting is something we are taught as children *not* to do. And yet here is Paul quite openly saying that he boasts about the Thessalonians to other churches – he is celebrating God's work in them. It therefore seems an odd choice of word if we look at it in the context we knew as children. Boasting about being the best at something in the form of 'showing off', trying to make yourself better than others, is not condoned. Nor is having a higher opinion of yourself than you should. However, many parents swell with pride

when they see their child perform on stage, pass exams, score a goal, get a swimming award, say something kind, do something brave ... the list is endless. Pride is right and good in those circumstances and so is boasting about these achievements, if it is done in the manner of celebrating success rather than comparing your child with someone else's.

In the days before digital photography, it was not uncommon for grandparents to be given a 'Boasting Book' of photos of their grandchildren to show to friends. The idea was not to say 'my grandchild is the best' but to allow them to take pride in the beautiful human that God had created as part of their family.

Paul had invested a lot in the Thessalonian church, founding it before being forced out of the city by enemies of the good news. But Paul kept in touch and heard good things. The Thessalonian church was persecuted but remained strong. It continued to grow, and this was largely because of the obvious love members had for one another. No wonder Paul wanted to boast. He was proud of them. He could see what a great job they were doing and wanted to celebrate God at work.

What about us? Do we find it easier to complain about church life than to celebrate what God is doing? How often do we go home from church and 'have a bit of a moan'? Maybe the hymn choices weren't to your taste this week, or the coffee was a bit weak, or the children made a lot of noise ..., but what was *good*? So a challenge might be to focus on the good rather than the frustrating, to look at what we are doing well as a congregation rather than what could be better. What unites us? What do we find encouraging? Who has done something praiseworthy this week? How do we show our love for each other? We may not find the answers to all these questions every week, but it's important that we ask them nonetheless. And when we *do* find an answer, let's not keep it to ourselves. Let's join Paul and celebrate – celebrate God at work among us; make a noise about it; bring it with you to worship – because encouraging one another will also encourage us to grow as our love deepens, which is another cause for celebration.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Holy God, we give you thanks and praise that, although we falter and fall and do not praise you as we ought, you love us and surround us with your shelter, care and protection.

We are so often unworthy of your love and yet, you forgive us and help us to turn our lives round, to do what is right, just and worthy of your name.

Fake news bombards us from all directions, but we are grateful that we can put our trust in you.

For those who surround us, love and care for us, who guide us and sustain us in our faith journey.

With those of faith who have gone before, we pray: may God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give us grace and peace. Amen

09 November – Living tradition

Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica to quash a rumour that Jesus had already returned. He encourages them to hold fast to what they have been taught and to stand firm to the traditions that the apostle himself had taught them.

Together we explore whether the traditions we hold to in our Christian lives point us to the living God.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 27 Year C

Job 19.23-27a; Psalm 17.1-9; **2 Thessalonians 2.1-5,13-17**; Luke 20.27-38

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5; 13-17 [NIV]

The Man of Lawlessness

2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us – whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter – asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

⁵ Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?

Stand Firm

¹³ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

¹⁶ May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Thought for the week

Do you have any treasured family traditions or ways of doing things? Family traditions come into play at particular times of year (think Christmas or birthdays). Often our family traditions are considered to be 'right', not because they are any better than any other, but because they have become ingrained in our consciousness. But they also embed themselves in our hearts, thus giving an affectionate

nostalgic glow to them. This means that, when these traditions are challenged, we can become quite defensive because of their emotional value to us.

In light of this, we need to be careful with our church traditions. We need to think about where they originated from and whether we are holding them too closely because they have some nostalgic significance. Sometimes our traditions and institutions are so ingrained that, if we visit another church which does things differently, we can feel alienated almost, as if they are doing it wrong!

Consequently, it doesn't do us any harm to stop and evaluate occasionally what we *do* Sunday by Sunday and ask ourselves *why* we do it that way. We have over 2000 years of church history to consider, not simply what we do in this building Sunday by Sunday. How many of these traditions are directly related to the Biblical truths that we have been given? Because, of course, this should be our benchmark when we are considering any form of tradition: Does Scripture proclaim it or is it just a good (or not so good) idea that has come about since the Bible was compiled?

It's interesting that, in our Epistle reading, Paul encourages the Thessalonian Christians to 'hold fast to the traditions that you were taught', because this was very much a fledgling church. It was certainly not old enough to have gathered traditions over the years. Nor was the congregation coming from a Jewish background with centuries of worship of God behind them. Thus, all they had learnt had been taught to them by Paul. Without being a fly on the wall in the church in Thessalonica, we can't know exactly what Paul taught them, but through our reading of his other letters, we can have a good idea: mainly that they were to cling to the truths of who Christ was, what he did for them and what that means for them now. Looking at verses 16-17 of our reading gives us more detail on this, namely:

- Jesus Christ is Lord
- God is our Father
- We are loved by Jesus

- Through grace (which is taken to mean our undeserved forgiveness through Christ's death) we have eternal life.

Thus, we can live lives filled with hope that this is not the only life there is: eternal life is for now and beyond. Therefore, we should live good lives worthy of Christ's love.

These are the traditions we need to cling to. This is what keeps the church alive. This is what brings us joy and hope. So, when we think about what we do in our church, we need to ask ourselves, does this or that activity/garment/hymn reflect these truths in some way? If not, then perhaps we need to reconsider whether they are valuable to build us up as a congregation, because the closer we cling to the truth the stronger we will become as the body of Christ in this place. And the stronger we are as a body, the better equipped we are to go from here and spread God's love in the world around us.



A prayer of adoration

In war and in peace, O Lord, we know you are our God, and we worship and adore you.

In good times and tough times, we know you are our God, and we worship and adore you.

In times of need and times of plenty, we know you are our God, and we worship and adore you.

In times of health and times of illness, we know you are our God, and we worship and adore you.

In this moment, on this day, we know you are our God, and we worship and adore you. Amen

16 November – How to live now

Paul is heavily critical of those who believed that Jesus had already returned and therefore saw no point in working. Instead, they relied on the support of the church to keep them fed! Paul reminds them sternly that they still live in the ‘not yet’ time before Christ’s return.

Today we explore how we, too, should live in the ‘now’ as followers of Jesus as we await his return.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 28 Year C

Malachi 4.1-2a; Psalm 98; **2 Thessalonians 3.6-13**; Luke 21.5-19

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 [NIV]

Warning Against Idleness

⁶In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.

⁹We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”

¹¹We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹²Such people we command and urge in

the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. ¹³And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.



Thought for the week

In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul is anxious to encourage the church in Thessalonica to live ‘in the now’. There was an expectation that Jesus would soon be returning and some were teaching that he had already done so – therefore, there was no point in them doing anything – if the world was about to end soon, why bother? Paul, however, doesn’t pull any punches. He calls them idlers and busybodies: too busy poking their noses into what others are doing than to bother to do anything themselves. (I’m sure we can all think of soap characters who behave in exactly this way!) But it was worse than that: because they weren’t working for a living, they were, in effect, sponging off the other hard-working members of the church. Paul was at pains to point out that, even when he was on his missionary journeys (when he would have had every right to ask for financial support), he worked for his keep.

Paul therefore contradicted the attitude that Christ had already returned. He explained that we still live in the ‘not yet’ time. We are not called on to be ‘so heavenly minded that we are no earthly use’,

as the old saying goes. Rather we should behave as if Jesus was beside us, and we are being his hands and feet.

Furthermore, if people know we are Christians, they will be looking and noticing how we behave. An OMS missionary told this story: *Animists believe that, after a person dies, the evil spirits that lived in the person take hold. Consequently, when someone dies the whole village is filled with hopelessness and despair. A man became a Christian and asked to be baptized. The villagers warned him: 'You'll disturb the spirits if you do that. You'll get sick.' Shortly after his baptism, the man became seriously ill. The missionaries prayed that God would heal him, thereby proving the villagers wrong and defeating the spirits. However, not long afterwards, the man died. Then a delegation from the village came to the missionaries saying: 'Now, tell us about your Jesus.' The missionaries were amazed and confused. 'But the man died,' they said. 'Yes,' the people replied, 'but we saw the **way** he died. If your God can help us face death like that then we want to know about him.'*

If how we face death is an important part of our witness, how much more is how we face life? Paul tells us, 'Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what's right.'

We are not at liberty to sit on our hands and do nothing as Christians. Our faith comes with responsibility. We need to keep working tirelessly for the kingdom. Whether that is by doing specific mission work, being a prayer warrior for justice, living out God's kingdom in our school, workplace or homes or making sure we do as much recycling as possible, how we live now is an important part of our witness and mission. The one thing we *mustn't* do is nothing.

We don't live in easy times. Every day we hear more news of wars that are dubbed 'the end of the world'. There seems to be no end of famines, people living in poverty, global warming on an alarming scale, and injustice everywhere we turn. It's tempting to think that we should do nothing because nothing we do can possibly make a difference. But Jesus challenges us not to give up but to endure. And not to endure by sitting back but by serving him with all that we are.

A prayer of confession

I'm sorry God if I've missed the point of being a Christian.

I'm sorry God if I have wavered in my faith, wandered from the path and followed the wrong group.

I'm sorry God if I've caused hurt and pain to those who love me.

I'm sorry God if I have been lazy in my faith and witness to you.

I'm sorry God for all of this and I ask you to forgive me.

Assurance of forgiveness

The Almighty God, who never fails us, hears our prayers, our confession and our sorrow and gives us now the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen

23 November – King of the turning world

The psalmist proclaims God as our refuge, strength and help in times of trouble – therefore, we should not fear, even when the world around us is in turmoil.

In a world just as tumultuous as in Biblical times, God still offers refuge – for humans and the whole of creation too. Yet what does refuge look like? Is it what we expect? Is it where we expect? On the Feast of Christ the King, we are reassured that Jesus is the king of this turning world.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Christ the King Year C

Jeremiah 23.1-6; **Psalm 46**; Colossians 1.11-20; Luke 23.33-43

Psalm 46 [NIV]

For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah.

According to *alamoth*. A song.

¹God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

³though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
⁵God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
⁶Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
⁷The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
⁸Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
⁹He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
¹⁰He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."
¹¹The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.



Thought for the week

We are rarely mindful of sharing Christ's kingdom with others and, when we do find ourselves thinking about it, we still give primary position to our wants and demote the needs of other beings to second rate. Some of us are good at caring for the other, non-human beings who share our planet. Perhaps we provide spring nesting boxes, winter hedgehog boxes, piles of leaves for worms to plug their burrows, logs to provide homes for bugs. These are the refuges of the non-human. God created this earth; he does not deny love and care to any part of it. We have just got used to assuming God offers it to us alone.

At this time of the year, some of us are busy putting our gardens to bed – trimming back trees and shrubs, sweeping up leaves. But perhaps in our pursuit of 'tidiness' we are depriving some other creature of a winter refuge.

Likewise, every time we turn the ignition key of our cars we may not think of islands in the Pacific lost because of climate change. But, if we're not conscious of the environmental impact of some of our actions, we may be depriving someone else of a habitat and refuge. Christ is their King too. When we buy a ready-made sandwich in plastic packaging, do we think of an ocean full of single-use plastic and the creatures who have lost their homes as a result?

How can we *really* show God's love by extending the God-given refuge we know to others? How would we feel if God withdrew from us his promise of refuge? Worshipping Christ as King, we need to acknowledge that we share one world with other human beings and creatures. Let's put the needs of others before our wants, so all might live in shalom in God's kingdom.

A prayer of commitment

As we move into the coming week, help us to carry in our thoughts all who need refuge and safety from threat, including those fleeing war and dangerous situations.

Let us pray for those suffering because of damaged environments,

and help us to be mindful of how our actions impact others.
Thank you, Lord God, for being our place of refuge, our king of a
turning world. Amen

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