

**MONDAY
3 AUGUST**

Jeremiah 28
Psalm 119:89-96
Matthew 14:13-21
or 14:22-end

**TUESDAY
4 AUGUST**

Jeremiah 30:1-2.
12-15. 18-22
Psalm 102:16-21
Matthew 14:22-end
or 15:1-2. 10-14

**WEDNESDAY
5 AUGUST**

Jeremiah 31:1-7
Psalm 121
Matthew 15:21-28

**THURSDAY
6 AUGUST**
Transfiguration
of Our Lord

Daniel 7:9-10. 13-14
Psalm 97
2 Peter 1:16-19
Luke 9:28-36

**FRIDAY
7 AUGUST**

Nahum 2:1.
3; 3:1-3. 6-7
Psalm 137:1-6 or
Deuteronomy
32:35-36. 39. 41
Matthew 16:24-28

**SATURDAY
8 AUGUST**

Habakkuk 1:12 – 2:4
Psalm 9:7-11
Matthew 17:14-20

REFLECTION

This week's Gospel readings are about success. Jesus feeds five thousand men, women and children – a great multitude; he walks on water; he heals those who are sick, including the daughter of a Canaanite woman and a boy with epilepsy; he is transfigured, all in white, and meets two great men of faith, Moses and Elijah.

The disciples must have looked for a time of shared glory or at least hoped to be famous by association, yet they are told: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). The week began with Jesus learning of the murder of John the Baptist, so he knows all too well that anyone who dares to proclaim in action that the kingdom of God is in our midst is at risk. This is because feeding those who are hungry, rescuing those who are drowning, including the Canaanite foreigner, healing those who are sick,

is not of interest to powerful people who want to keep the status quo.

As disciples we must know the risk, yet still we are called to act out the kingdom of God.

Jesus and the Canaanite woman, from Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois Church in Paris, France. Zvonimir Atletic / Shutterstock.com



PRAYER

God of those who are powerless, strengthen us in our willingness to bear the cost of following your Son.
Enable us to give up our fear and to rejoice in the small signs of your kingdom in our midst, where love and justice are found and shared.

HYMN WRITERS

PART I – CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT (1789-1871)

Charlotte Elliott, came from an influential evangelical family in London. Her maternal grandfather, Henry Venn, was a founder of what became known as the Clapham Sect – a network of Christians who shared moral and spiritual values and campaigned for an end to slavery.

As a young woman, Charlotte was a talented musician, artist and writer, known for her sparkling wit. Following a debilitating illness in 1821, however, she became chronically ill, largely confined indoors. At around this time a Swiss Protestant minister and hymn writer named César Malan visited her father's Clapham residence. When he asked Charlotte whether she was at peace with God, she initially resented the question. A few days later, however, she called on Dr Malan and apologised, telling him that she wanted to become a Christian. It's said that Malan answered, "Come just as you are," and that Charlotte committed her life to Christ that day.

Charlotte became a prolific writer, penning numerous poems and hymns. It's said that she wrote her best-known hymn – "Just As I Am without One Plea" – when the family had gone out and Charlotte, left behind at home, became overwhelmed by a sense of loneliness and uselessness. It poignantly expresses her sense of being "poor, wretched, blind," and her faith that Jesus will "welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve."

In all, Charlotte wrote about a hundred and fifty hymns and many poems, some of which were printed anonymously. Billy Graham and his team used her hymns in almost all their crusades, since it presented "the strongest possible Biblical basis for the call of Christ". The Christian writer Lorella Rouster called it "an amazing legacy for an invalid woman who suffered from depression and felt useless to God's service."

Here is a woman whose legacy lives on, whose inspiration lies not only in her hymns and poetry, but also in her inspirational life, because she answered God's call and fulfilled her potential, despite the odds being stacked against her.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by Caroline Hodgson and Heather Smith



Charlotte Elliott

Eighth week after Trinity

Monday 3 August to Saturday 8 August 2020

WEEK

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MONDAY
10 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 1:2-5. 24-end
 Psalm 148:1-4. 12-13
 Matthew 17:22-end

TUESDAY
11 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 2:8 – 3:4
 Psalm 119:65-72
 Matthew 18:1-5. 10.
 12-14

WEDNESDAY
12 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22
 Psalm 113
 Matthew 18:15-20

THURSDAY
13 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 12:1-12
 Psalm 78:58-64
 Matthew 18:21 – 19:1

FRIDAY
14 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 16:1-15.
 60-end
 Psalm 118:14-18
 or *Canticle: Song of Deliverance*
 Matthew 19:3-12

SATURDAY
15 AUGUST
The Blessed Virgin Mary
 Isaiah 61:10-end
 or *Revelation*
 11:19 – 12:6. 10
 Psalm 45:10-end
 Galatians 4:4-7
 Luke 1:46-55

REFLECTION

Ezekiel the priest is called to act as God's prophet in the midst of exile. Jerusalem fell in 597 BC and many were taken to Babylon as captives. It was here that Ezekiel received his call in a vision of



God, with its strange depiction of the four living creatures and the heavenly throne. The message Ezekiel had to deliver was tough. It was about faithlessness, death and destruction, lamentation and grief. God is depicted as the distraught bridegroom who, having rescued an abandoned girl, brought her up and married her, then finds her unfaithful. It is a parable, but the distress expressed is palpable and the image profound. Its profundity is there towards the end of the week, as God expresses a love that is not spoiled, and in Saturday's reading from Isaiah the bride can sing of her delight in her bridegroom.

There is an intimacy and fierceness in this prophetic image that Christians can miss if we're not vigilant. In this image there is bodily delight and physical intimacy, that can begin to heal some of our inherited distrust of the flesh. God is not ashamed of bodies, not yours, not mine.

PRAYER

God of delight and embrace,
 as you rejoice in your creation,
 help us to give up our fears of the physical.
 You have made us in our rich variety as one human race,
 so help us cherish our bodies and those of others
 and, in that, learn to do justice.

HYMN WRITERS

PART II – SARAH FLOWER ADAMS (1805-1848)

Sarah Flower Adams was born in Essex. She came from a long line of radicals, dissenters and rebels, and was the younger daughter of the radical editor Benjamin Flower and Eliza Gould. Her mother died when she was only five and the family moved to Middlesex, where they met Harriet Martineau, who wrote about Sarah and her sister Eliza in her novel *Deerbrook*.

At eighteen Sarah broke the female record for climbing Ben Lomond. Back home, she and Eliza befriended and discussed their religious doubts with the young poet Robert Browning. Having been an active young woman, however, Sarah's health started to fail in her twenties, eventually forcing her to give up a promising acting career.

After their father's death the sisters became part of the household of the radical preacher William Johnson Fox, minister of the famous South Place Unitarian Chapel in London. Both girls began literary pursuits and hymn writing. Eliza often composed the tunes while Sarah contributed the words.

When she was visiting her friend, the feminist philosopher Harriet Taylor Mill, Sarah met a young man named William Bridges Adams, who was an author, inventor and locomotive engineer. They were married in 1834 and set up house at Loughton in Essex.

Neither sister was in good health, and Eliza died in 1846 after a long illness. Sarah's health also declined and she died at the age of forty-three. She was buried beside her sister and parents. Mourners sang one of her hymns at her graveside: "*He Sendeth Sun, He Sendeth Shower*".

Sarah's best-known hymn, "*Nearer, My God, to Thee*", is based on the story of Jacob's dream in Genesis 28, and was allegedly played as the Titanic went down. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given her idealistic roots and her own thwarted aspirations, the hymn conveys a sense of restless searching – looking for a way up, out of the mundane, towards the light: "*Though like the wanderer / The sun gone down, / Darkness be over me, / My rest a stone. / Yet in my dreams I'd be / Nearer my God, to Thee.*"

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
 Caroline Hodgson
 and
 Heather Smith



Sarah Flower Adams

Ninth week after Trinity

Monday 10 August to
 Saturday 15 August
 2020

WEEK

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MONDAY
17 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 24:15-24
 Psalm 78:1-8
 Matthew 19:16-22

TUESDAY
18 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 28:1-10
 Psalm 107:1-3. 40. 43
 Matthew 19:23-end

WEDNESDAY
19 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 34:1-11
 Psalm 23
 Matthew 20:1-16

THURSDAY
20 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 36:23-28
 Psalm 51:7-12
 Matthew 22:1-14

FRIDAY
21 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 37:1-14
 Psalm 107:1-8
 Matthew 22:34-40

SATURDAY
22 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 43:1-7
 Psalm 85:7-end
 Matthew 23:1-12

REFLECTION

How you hear the Gospel readings this week will be largely determined by where you stand economically. A day labourer, such as someone on a zero-hours contract, would hear with joy that their pay will be the same as anyone else's. Someone with few possessions or someone who never gets invited anywhere could hear the story of the wedding banquet or of the rich young man as an encouraging sign that material possessions don't give automatic entry to the kingdom of God, but that God invites irrespective of status.

The Gospel on Saturday is a hard reading for religious folk, since they might hope that being scrupulously religious would get them preferential treatment. Not so! The most religious among Jesus' contemporaries are bidden to be humble rather than ostentatious in their religious practice. It seems that the reward is that the usual way of things is overturned – "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (Matthew 19:30), and it challenges us to rejoice in others going before us. Such humility is about recognising the worth of others in God's eyes and rejoicing in it.

PRAYER

In our attempts at humility help us, dear God, to put ourselves to one side and rejoice in others and their place in your kingdom. Help us to let go of false values and to find peace in your new order.



Jesus and the rich young man in Grace Church Chiangmai, Thailand. Freedom Studio / Shutterstock.com

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HYMN WRITERS

PART III – JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER (1807–1892)

Whittier is probably best known for penning the hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind", which was originally written as a poem called "The Brewing of Soma". It conjures up images of a group of Vedic priests (an Indian sect) gathered around a blazing fire and cauldron, where they concoct and drink a powerful hallucinogenic potion extracted from plant stalks. As it takes hold they become frenzied until they're in a wild state of "drunken joy", believing they're experiencing divinity. Whittier's point was that some Christians were intoxicated by a heady mix of euphoria and rapture in worship, and that "music, incense, vigils drear, and trance" created a false sense of divinity. By contrast, Whittier believed that God could be heard as a "still, small voice of calm".

Born in Massachusetts of Huguenot ancestry, Whittier was raised on a farm. (It was discovered that he was colour-blind when he was unable to distinguish ripe from unripe strawberries.) There was only just enough money to get by and Whittier was never physically robust. He became an avid reader and devoured his father's books on Quakerism and their teachings, with their emphasis on humanitarianism, compassion and social responsibility, became the foundation of his ideology.

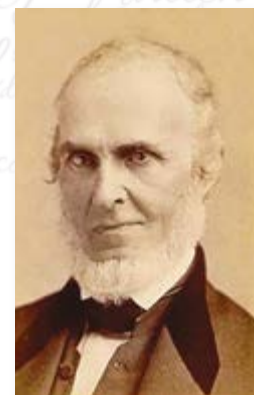
He was a magazine editor and founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, devoting much of his life to the abolitionist cause. Any hopes of a political career were dashed because his vocal demand for the emancipation of slaves alienated many influential people. Nevertheless, he considered it morally and socially right and necessary. He travelled widely, attending conventions, securing votes, speaking and lobbying politicians. He was mobbed, stoned and run out of town for this troubles, and in 1838 the offices of *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, of which he was the editor, were burned down by a pro-slavery mob.

He produced two collections of poetry: *Poems Written During the Progress of the Abolition Question in the United States* and *Voices of Freedom*. In 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, and he turned to other forms of poetry for the remainder of his life.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by Caroline Hodgson and Heather Smith



John Greenleaf Whittier

Tenth week after Trinity

Monday 17 August to Saturday 22 August 2020

MONDAY
24 AUGUST
Bartholomew
the Apostle
Isaiah 43:8-13 or
Acts 5:12-16
Psalm 145:1-7
Acts 5:12-16 or
1 Corinthians 4:9-15
Luke 22:24-30

TUESDAY
25 AUGUST
2 Thessalonians
2:1-3a. 14-end
Psalm 98
Matthew 23:23-26

WEDNESDAY
26 AUGUST
2 Thessalonians
3:6-10. 16-end
Psalm 128
Matthew 23:27-32

THURSDAY
27 AUGUST
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Psalm 145:1-7
Matthew 24:42-end

FRIDAY
28 AUGUST
1 Corinthians
1:17-25
Psalm 33:6-12
Matthew 25:1-13

SATURDAY
29 AUGUST
1 Corinthians
1:26-end
Psalm 33:12-15.
20-end
Matthew 25:14-30

REFLECTION

In the psalter we have a treasure for all seasons. When my prayers become dry and pointless, when I struggle to believe anything, the psalms can speak for me, and for you, if you let them. This week's psalms are realistic about our longings – we want to eat the fruit of our labour with those we love around the table. That image is homely, warm and secure, of plenty and ease. That psalm comes in the middle of this week and is held in place by praise of God and an invitation not to keep this to ourselves but to share it across the generations. Tell the kids and grandkids, tell your elders!

The week concludes with the psalm telling how God, our help and shield, has a care for all people, not just folk like us. That's the shape of the week's psalms and the delicious infill is that we are not alone in our praise of God – for the seas, the hills, the stars, the deeps, all sing together for joy in the heavens. We are in a universe of praise and singing, if only we be still and listen.

PRAYER

Glory to you, God, creator of this universe of wonder.
 We join our singing with that of all creation,
 as we marvel at what is around and within us.
 The wren, the rock and the rose proclaim a wonder,
 of which we too are a part,
 and behold, it is very good.



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THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXV – LAMENTATIONS – A BOOK ABOUT DESOLATION

Richard Greatrex continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.

Lamentations is a collection of five individual poems, each crying out with the trauma of desolation. The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, calling them the Lamentations of Jeremiah, sites them straight after the book of the prophet who witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and Temple in 587 BC. The poems iterate the pain of a nation torn apart, having seen its capital city destroyed and its holy places desecrated. In the Hebrew canon it is classified as one of the Writings, in company with the likes of Ruth and Ecclesiastes, while the attribution to Jeremiah is absent.

Each poem is carefully structured to consist of twenty-two (or multiples of twenty-two) lines, reflecting the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The first four poems are acrostics based on the alphabet. It is possible that each poem was written by a different author and later collated; they view the national tragedy from diverse perspectives, introducing a variety of voices that interweave throughout. We hear from an overarching narrator in poems one, two and four, but also from the viewpoint of Jerusalem personified (Daughter Zion) halfway through chapters one and two. A shamed, humiliated, captive speaks in poem three, as does the shattered nation in three, four and five. God's voice is silent throughout and, while chapter three places a note of hope at the centre of the book – "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases" – this is merely a whisper that is swallowed by surrounding despair, a catalogue of suffering that, as the acrostics declare, extends from A to Z.

Liturgically, Lamentations is used in synagogues on the day of commemoration for the fall of Jerusalem and in churches on Good Friday for the death of Christ, cementing their effectiveness as prayers of grief and protest that passionately appeal to God for deliverance and transcend the brutality of dehumanising suffering, still holding on, however precariously, to faith in the power and willingness of God to save.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by Caroline Hodgson and Heather Smith



Eleventh week after Trinity

Monday 24 August to Saturday 29 August 2020