

Dear Friend

We are now moving towards the end of Thy Kingdom Come period of prayer – a period when we have been praying for people we know to find the love of God through his son, Jesus. Today I shall be looking at Day 9 of the Prayer Journal which we have been using as the basis of our reflections since Ascension.

If you have only just joined us, the Journal can be found at:

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/prayer-journal-2019>. (Don't worry that it says 2019 – this year's journal can be found here!)

Today's theme is The Father's Love and the scripture passage is:

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." ²²But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:20-24)

This is the passage towards the end of the Parable of the Prodigal Son who asked his father for his inheritance, took it away and spent it all and then realised that he would be much happier at home with his family. There are many things that could be said about this passage. Firstly, I'd like point to the beginning of the passage which reminds me so much of that wonderful prayer we say after Communion – "Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home". The Luke passage must have been the inspiration behind this wonderful image which always touches me every time we say it. The latest news is that it may not be many weeks now before we can gather as Christians – socially distanced of course – in our church and say those words together.

The image is of a father (Our Father) welcoming his son home – not waiting until he arrived at the front door, but rushing out to greet his long lost son. This is just the picture that we need to have in our mind's eye when we pray for those we wish will come to Christ or come back to Christ. God will accept them no matter what they have done. We pray that they will come to know this.

The passage also puts into contrast the time when families could greet each other closely and have a meal together, something we haven't been able to do for some

time. It may be that it won't be too long now before many of us can meet up with family we haven't seen for some time except perhaps through the internet. We may not yet be able to hug each other but with the right sort of thought and planning an outdoor meal together could be possible. Thank God, the weather is good enough for outdoor socialising!

Many of us may still not be able to meet others if they are shielding due to an underlying health problem. You are nearer the beginning of the journey the son in the parable had to take to get home, but his story tells us that it will happen. And our families will be there to greet us when we arrive. Our Father is of course with us on every step of that journey.

So let us pray that all of us, but especially those we have been praying for, will find their way home:

Loving God, please get my friends on the road where they see You running to meet them. Thank You that You welcome us with joy however far or however long we have been away. Amen.

With love and prayers

Alison