

Lectionary readings: Zephaniah 1: 7, 12-18; Psalm 90: 1-8, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11; Matthew 25: 14-30

For reflection and prayer

- **Zephaniah 1:** v7 stands out for me: *'Stand in silence in the presence of the Sovereign Lord.'* Not bad advice for us in the world we live in today, as in the days of Zephaniah - people's property being plundered, people losing their money and home, people not tasting the fruits of their labour, money worthless to save us, distress and anguish, ruin and desolation, people groping their way through life as if blind. Is this God bringing all this upon us in anger? Or is it not rather we who have brought all this on ourselves through going our own way and paying little or no heed to God? Are we prepared to see what's happening today as a wake-up call to turn back to God and His ways?
- **Psalm 90:** The Psalmist is contrasting God's eternal nature with our puny, frail, weak, imperfect human nature, our lives characterised by sin, pain, trouble. This is a somewhat gloomy picture of life. But we need to remember God's presence with us and His love for us. Life is not without meaning. The prayer in v12 is one we need to pray constantly: *'Teach us, O Beloved, to honour each day that we may have a heart of wisdom.'* (Psalms for Praying) Let's keep that prayer on our lips and in our hearts this week.
- **1Thessalonians 5:** *'The day of the Lord'* - is it not every day? God comes to us every moment unexpectedly for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to respond. His coming can take us by surprise. How open am I, how open are you, to the Lord coming this

moment - not in some cataclysmic way, but in the ordinary events of our lives? We are children of light, says Paul. *'So let's not sleepwalk through life...'* (v6 The Message) *'Walk out ... dressed up in faith, love and the hope of salvation* (healing, wholeness) (v8 The Message) We are alive with the life of God, so we need to encourage one another, affirm one another, give one another hope. Here are questions for us to reflect on this week. When did I last encounter God? How willing am I to encounter God with me now in what I am doing, in how I am feeling? God's coming is not to be feared, for He is a God of love, infinite love, unconditional love.

- **Matthew 25:** The parable of the talents. We have all been given gifts by God. Are we using these gifts well and developing them? It's not about how many gifts we have, but how well we are using the gifts we have. We have all been given gifts of time and money. But, in addition, we each have individual gifts unique to each one. Why not list your gifts this week and reflect on what you are doing with them - hiding them or developing them and using them to the glory of God?

A prayer

Gracious God, You love me just as I am. You have not made any mistake in creating me as I am. I find this a great encouragement; it lifts my spirits and renews my hope. Generous God, You receive all that I offer You; You receive back the gifts You have given to me, and so I find I am empowered to give more and more. Challenging God, You accept me just as I am, but You don't want me to remain the same. You call me to go beyond my comfort zone, to follow Your vision for the world, to tread new paths, to be Your hands and feet, and to become all that You see I am capable of becoming. Thank You, Lord, for believing in me.