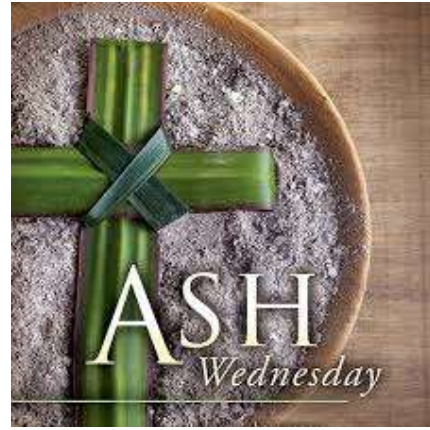




**ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH**  
**PRAYERS AND REFLECTION**  
**BASED ON Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

**March 5th, 2025 – Ash Wednesday**



**The practice of faith**

1. “Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.
2. “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.
3. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
4. So that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
5. “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.
6. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
  
16. “And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.
17. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,
18. So that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
19. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal,
20. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.
21. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## **QUIET PRAYER** – adaptation of Walter James

My Saviour, it would be a sad thing for me if you withdrew yourself from my life. My desire for goodness, and my sorrow for sin, are the fruits of your presence within me; and if you should leave me, all chance of my ever becoming pure would vanish. I thank you, Jesus, my divine friend for your presence in my life each day. Live increasingly in my soul. Take entirely within your ruling every movement and motive of my soul. Inspire my lightest words. Give me every day an increased consciousness of your presence. Let it a bright and vivid reality; not a kill-joy, but a constant inspiration, a never-ceasing source of happiness. Make it true for me to say: “You, O Christ, are all I want and all I require.” Amen

## **PRAYER POINTS FOR CONFESSION**

- For the times when I’m being an exhibitionist and not showing humility
- For not sharing Your word but keeping it secretive
- Not having confidence that a humble heart and faith will have its own reward
- For not understanding what the true treasure is

## **WORDS OF GRACE**

Lord, I have placed the worst of my thoughts and actions into your hands of love, mercy and grace. You have promised to cleanse me when I confess my sins. I do now so confess and rest peacefully in the cleansing palm of your hand. Thanks be to God amen.

## **REFLECTION:**

One of the first images we have when we think of treasure is gold, a treasure chest, shiny jewels, or perhaps a fancy car, or a mansion, if I were writing a movie I might even think of a map where x marks the spot. Whilst they are one kind of treasure I guess, they aren’t are not anything like what Matthew has in mind. The nature of true treasure and the attitudes that shape our relationship with material wealth and spiritual fulfillment is where we find ourselves today. In this passage of Matthew Jesus emphasizes the importance of sincerity in our prayers and spiritual practices, contrasting against any outward display of pious exhibitionism. Luke’s story about the inability of the disciples being able to heal the demon possessed boy highlights the necessity of maintaining a strong and faithful relationship with Christ.

When Jesus speaks about fasting, he’s critiquing the hypocrites who are engaging in public recognition for their acts of devotion. The act of fasting isn’t just for physical purposes, it’s creating and recreating a deeper spiritual discipline meant to cultivate humility and dependence on God. When we do this in private (secretly), we’re aligning our heart with the Spirit seeking approval and reward from God rather than from those around us who are hearing our sometimes-wordy prayers. Here Jesus is highlighting a

key aspect of true treasure: it resides not in earthly recognition but in our genuine relationship with God.

There's an interesting shift in v19-21 where the focus from earthly riches moves to heavenly treasures. Jesus warns against storing up earthly treasures, which are easily destroyed by moths, and destroyed by rust, and make us vulnerable to thieves breaking into our house and stealing what we considered to be our treasures. In today's humid climate we're dealing with mold and moisture decaying many things. Earthly treasures are transient and over time decay. In contrast, the treasures of heaven are imperishable, held secure in the eternal Kingdom of God. This distinction should urge us to willingly invest in what can never be striped away from us – acts of love, kindness, and service which enrich our spiritual relationship with Christ, and the lives of others.

The essence of true treasure lies with each individual in the choices we make and our priorities. Jesus teaches that where our treasure is, there our hearts are also. This insightful statement is an invitation to engage and reflect upon what we truly value in life. Are we investing our time, talents, gifts, skills, and resources in short-lived pleasure and material possessions, which never really fully satisfy us, or are we seeking something quite different and transformative such as building a legacy of hope, faith and love?

Ultimately, true treasure is found in our heart and soul connecting with God's will. It points towards a life devoted to seeking righteousness, embodying love, and continuing to nurture and develop a faith community of grace. By prioritising spiritual wealth, we are growing a deeper joy and fulfillment that permeates our being, allowing us to navigate life's inevitable uncertainties with peace and purpose. In this way, Matthew's reading serves as a reminder to reflect on our priorities, encouraging us to seek treasures that are eternal, nurturing a heart that beats in a permanent rhythm with God's divine love.

## **PRAYER POINTS OF THANKS**

- thank you for being our example of humility
- thank you for those who are transformed by faith, love and grace.
- thank you for continuing being by my side guiding me to know what to prioritise and what to leave behind.
- Thank you for the heart that wants to beat in a permanent rhythm with Your divine love.

## PRAYER POINTS OF INTECESSION

- For those who see their only treasure in material wealth
- For those who are overwhelmed by life, and the challenges they face
- For those who find it difficult to live in the mystery of faith, grace and joy.
- For those who find it difficult to see their own faults.
- For those who have lost their sight of Christ Jesus- may they see Him again.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idSeHw4R3K0>

Based on

Matt 6:16-21

