



ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH

APRIL 23rd, 2025

PRAYERS AND REFLECTION

BASED ON PSALM 118:14-24

Psalm 118:14-24

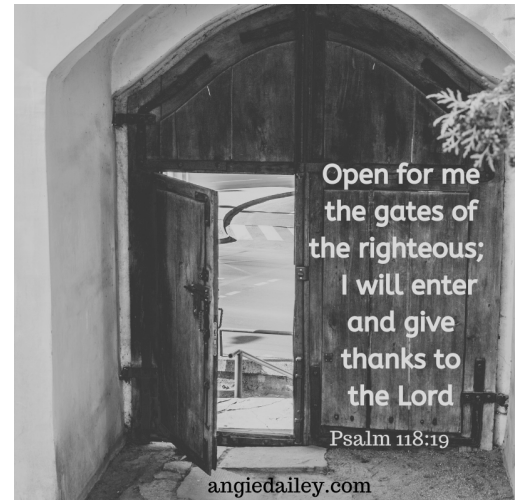
- ¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.
- ¹⁵ There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the
righteous:
"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
¹⁶ the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."
¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live
and recount the deeds of the Lord.
- ¹⁸ The Lord has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.
- ¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.
- ²⁰ This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.
- ²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
- ²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
- ²³ This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
- ²⁴ This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

'GOD OF LOVE' by David Clowes

Lord, because you are a God of love, I can come to you without fear, and because I know you love me, I can confidently come to you with my question.

I come because you have called me to come, and I have come because the Holy Spirit fills me with a longing to praise you.

Lord, I come in hope, with joy and to give you thanks and praise.



I come in the name of Christ, the one who opened our eyes to your grace and filled my heart with your love. Amen.

PRAYER POINTS OF THANKS AND PRAISE

- Thank you, Lord, for the people in our midst who are gifted with music and an encouraging attitude.
- Thank you, Lord, for those who bring joy, knowledge, encouragement and Godly wisdom into our lives
- Thank you, Lord the everlasting life of Christ expressed through prayers, praise, the Word, fellowship, as I acknowledge God's presence in my life.
- Thank you, Lord, for the freedom to rejoice and bring glory to God's name.
- Praise to you that you heard my prayer; relieving me of my burdens.
- Lord, all praise to you for standing beside me as I strengthen my resolve when feeling powerless or anxious.
- I give my praise to you Lord for being fair in your judgment of my shortcomings.
- Thanks for the life and blessings to the Catholic Church from Pope Francis

PRAYER POINTS FOR PRAYER OF CONFESSION

- For not seeing the good things that many people are doing.
- For rather being bored than doing something about it; for relying too much on modern technology and not enough on self-reflection.
- Not reflecting God's generosity in our faith community
- Being blind to the marvelous things which surround me.

WORDS OF GRACE

In the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom; for God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Hear then Christ's word of grace to us: 'Your sins are forgiven.' Amen

REFLECTION

As we continue to move through the Easter Season towards Ascension Sunday, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday we are uplifted by these verses in Psalm 118. In this passage we can hear the community celebrating with gratitude their salvation through the event of Jesus' resurrection and God's continual presence amongst them.

I thought I would specifically look at verse 19 which reads: *¹⁹Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.* It's a request to God that we all make at some point during our walk our pilgrimage towards the promised land. This psalm gives us confidence to be thankful to God who would deliver and free us from the harsh darkness of this world, rescuing us and

carry us into the Kingdom of God. Our life on this earth has come to its end giving fresh life into the next as promised. Verse 19 captures our desire to live in full and restored relationship with God which knows joy, grace and love. This is moment in time when we can take in a new breath of life and start again with Christ as our central .

Our first impression of the imagery of gates is probably one of a barrier or threshold which needs to be stepped over, an entry that prompts us to be self-reflective on our physical and spiritual progress in the same way as a groom carries his bride over the threshold as the relationship takes a step forward. *'The gates of righteousness'* symbolise not only the need for us to enjoy fellowship and worship in our faith community but also the much wider invitation and a willingness to live closer to the Laws of Moses, taking note of the Prophets, and living in the teachings of Christ's Good News through the Gospel message. To desire the gates to be opened in v19, depicts we have a longing for righteousness, which goes to the heart of personal and authentic integrity, in our relationship with God.

In our contemporary lives, the quest for 'righteousness' may appear daunting. We navigate through a world filled with moral ambiguity, where what for some may be seen as 'right' often clashes with societal norms. Yet, this passage encourages us to look and be righteous. The declaration, *'that I may go through them,'* reinforces a commitment to move forward despite the acknowledgement that the path will have its challenges. It suggests an intentional step towards an intentional desire to know more about our spirituality, honesty and how we might be transformed as our spirituality goes deeper as we become role models for those around us.

As our relationship changes, we want to offer praise to God, joyfully entering through these gates of freedom and salvation involves the use of prayers and songs as an expression of our gratitude for what God has done, is doing and will do for us. The grace of God is essential for us who believe Christ's resurrection is an actuality. Each moment of worship isn't a personal act alone, it's also a communal celebration of faith, accompanying an atmosphere of eternal hope.

Verse 19 could also be seen in light of our search for justice. The *'gates of righteousness'* may imply a call to engage more with those who live in difficult circumstances and conditions not just in our close communities, but around the globe. Questions we can ask ourselves might take into consideration how the actions and decisions we take could have a positive influence on societal outcomes and why we do it. The call to righteousness challenges each of us to be aware of the changes that we can make in people's lives for those who are experiencing, oppression, being bearers of Christ's love and compassion in a world that all too often just feels loveless and chaotic.

This one little verse reflects our desire to walk in righteousness and joyfully praise God for the guidance God provides through the scriptures, prayer and the unbroken relationship we share together.

We are encouraged to acknowledge we walk in the presence of God committed to living our lives reflecting God's desire for us to deepen our spiritual relationship

through God's grace and love for us. As followers of Christ we believe that God's acts of salvation was fulfilled in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, for which we give heartfelt thanks.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER POINTS

- For our salvation through the resurrection of God's beloved Son, Jesus.
- For the image of a 'gate of righteousness' and being thankful to God for what has been done for me and the world I share with others.
- For knowing that this is another day made by the good and loving Lord
- For loving everyone, including those who have different cultures, ethnicity, politics, genders, sexuality, faith traditions, likes and dislikes with a firm and steadfast love.
- For the different generations who learn from each other
- For 'The Meeting Place' ministry and mission to go ahead.
- For those who are prayerfully and spiritually working towards announcing who the next Pope and leader of the Catholic Church will be.

Lord, you have brought us to this moment in our lives. We look back and give thanks for all you have done for us and for being with us no matter what. We look forward to all we must face in the future in the knowledge of your promise to be with us always. So today I commit myself to be open to you and to be channels of your peace and grace to all I meet.

Lord, I speak freely with an open heart, as I speak the words of the Holy Spirit continuing to be a faithful witness for the resurrected Christ Jesus. In the name and Spirit of Christ. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNwGMs7k6gA>

