

Lectionary readings: Isaiah 58: 1-9; Psalm 112: 1-10; 1 Corinthians 2: 1-12; Matthew 5: 13-20

For reflection and prayer:

- **Isaiah 58:** Isaiah condemns the people's religious practices. Outwardly, they seem to love God and are faithful at worship. So what is missing? Precisely this: their motives for worshipping God, their self-interest. They don't begin to know God and how He wants them to live. Do we? Are we single-minded in our worship? Are we keeping our religious practices separate from our everyday lives? In God's eyes they are one. Is our worship matched by love and compassion? We need to remember our connectedness with all other human beings, all created in God's image, all precious to Him. Our worship continues when we leave church and reach out with God's love to those around us every day.
- **Psalm 112:** The Psalmist says that we are blessed if we live in a close relationship to God and delight in Him. Love and kindness characterise our lives and we become co-creators with God and bless the world with our presence. We are generous people, giving freely and lavishing gifts on the poor and needy. We can change the world through living out of the unlimited abundance that God has placed within us to share with those around us.
- **1 Corinthians 2:** Paul was proclaiming the mystery of God. Often today we think we have God taped, so to speak; we know exactly how He thinks and works and what He is like. But we need to remember that God's ways are very different from ours and we need to be

open to see God in new and often surprising ways. The Gospel is counter-cultural and God's wisdom is totally opposed to the wisdom of the world. There is a sense in which we will never understand God, but God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus and He goes on revealing Himself to us if we are willing to open our hearts to Him and spend time just being with God listening to Him. Then the Spirit of God illumines our hearts and minds in a way that no amount of human wisdom can do.

- **Matthew 5:** Our faith can never be simply a matter of individual salvation. Our faith is about our participation in God through His Spirit and our having an impact on the world around us. We are called to be as salt adding the taste and flavour and goodness of God to a world that often seems to have lost its goodness. We are called to be as light, shining with the light of God's presence in a world that often seems dark and evil. As we are present to God and aware of His presence with us moment by moment, letting His love penetrate our hearts, so we can reach out with God's love and compassion; we become like Jesus, one with God, seeking to transform the world. But, as Mahatma Ghandi said, 'We must be the change that we wish to see in the world.'

A prayer

Shining God, even the darkness is not dark to you. Shine in our darkness, light of our lives. When we walk in the grey gloom of confusion, when pain drains all the colour out of life, when we are paralysed by the darkness of fear, shine in our darkness. When we know that others are walking in the darkness, give us courage to be light for them. Amen.

(Kathy Galloway)

