

On Matt. 12.1-8  
Mark 2.23-28  
Luke 6.1-5

Jesus, Son of Man, True Human Being,  
make us realise that God's commands to humankind are fulfilled and centred in you,  
not in detailed regulations,  
and that you, as the true human being,  
call us to put human needs above ritual regulation.  
Teach us to define the command for a regular day of rest  
in terms of release of human beings from want and suffering,  
by meeting their needs,  
and setting them free to rejoice together in your salvation.  
So help us to understand the need for a Sabbath rest  
without making that a petty or tyrannical imposition.  
We ask this for your mercy's sake,  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.1-8  
Mark 2.23-28  
Luke 6.1-5

Holy God,  
as we seek to apply your commands,  
give us a true sense of your priorities,  
that your salvation,  
foreshadowed in David, and fulfilled in Jesus, the true human being,  
may govern our thinking.  
So in the light of his sacrifice,  
may your mercy be our guide,  
and thus may all else find its rightful place,  
neither ignored, nor made a fetish that damages our own humanity.  
This we ask for the sake of the same Jesus Christ, Son of Man,  
Sovereign over the Sabbath for humanity's sake.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.8-14  
Mark 3.1-6  
Luke 6.6-11

Jesus Christ,  
who healed the sick with the withered arm on the Sabbath,  
give us, we pray, rest and release from all that shrivels our humanity,  
and restore life to those parts of our personalities that are powerless and dead.  
Above all, by your Spirit,  
give strength and fullness to our trust in you  
and the grateful love and generosity that draw their being from it,  
that we may ourselves spread your healing, enlivening power to others,  
and rejoice in all that brings true fullness of life to people.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.9-14

Mark 3.1-6

Luke 6.6-11

God of life,

sometimes the most destructive paralyses and deadnesses in our lives  
are those we do not even notice,

- the withering of the power to sympathise with others,
- the shrivelling of the ability to be open to your goodness,  
and to your Spirit's ability to heal,
- the decay of our generosity.

We may mistake the rigour of self righteousness, legalism, judgmentalism,  
and bitterness, anger and hatred  
for the vigour of healing love.

Deliver us, we pray, from crippling false values,  
that we may not meet you as our enemy,  
but welcome you as our liberator, healer and friend,  
when you meet us in Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.1-14

Mark 2.23-3.6

Luke 6.1-11

God our Father,

help us to realise that your whole character is the goodness and love shown in Jesus,  
and your commandments are meant to guide us to healing and fullness of life.

So preserve us from neurotic clinging to human additions and interpretations  
which distort your commands into something enslaving and life destroying.

Let us not fight against your Son and Spirit's work of liberation and enabling  
in our lives and those of others.

Let us rather join in Christ's freeing and empowering mission,  
that we may ourselves enter, and enable others to share,  
in your Kingdom of a humanity fulfilled as your family,  
in rest from evil and oppression,  
and grateful joy and celebration

of your overflowing and creative being of love.

This we ask through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
the Son of Man, Sovereign and fulfiller of the Sabbath.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.9-14  
Luke 13.10-17; 14.1-6

God our Creator and liberator,  
you gave the Sabbath as a source of rest and joy for all creatures.  
Your Son could assume that even his critics  
would rescue and relieve animals in peril or discomfort on the Sabbath,  
as on other days.  
Yet today many animals are constantly kept in cruel conditions,  
unable to move freely, or exercise their proper characters  
on any day in the week.  
May humankind see the wider purpose of your Sabbath,  
and of your whole creation and salvation,  
that creatures may come to the appropriate fullness of their various beings,  
and the world be a place of beauty and joy.  
So may we seek that all people,  
and other species and creatures,  
may be able to fulfil their natures,  
that the world may indeed flourish in joy and beauty,  
in reflection of the glory of your own being,  
through Jesus Christ, your Word and Wisdom,  
in whom all things find their harmony and goal.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.15-25

God our Father,  
we praise you for the salvation brought by your Son, Jesus Christ,  
his healing the sick,  
and proclaiming the victory of justice,  
in his preaching and mighty works,  
in overcoming sin by his sacrificial death  
and in triumphing over all the powers of evil by his resurrection.  
We praise you that he achieved your will by the way of gentleness and self giving.  
He did not crush us weak and erring people,  
but brought us forgiveness and raised us up.  
Help us too to stand for justice and bring healing  
in the Spirit of gentleness and wisdom,  
that all people may know your glory and your love,  
through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.15-21; 14.35

God of truth and love,  
you call us in Christ to a full union with yourself,  
                    as children with a loving parent,  
                    and as friends who know your will.  
May we ever grow in this union,  
but help us also to remember  
                    that Christ on earth was ready to heal all who came to him,  
and that those who only touched the fringe of Christ's garment were made well,  
  wholly rescued.  
So may we not despair or condemn or worry unduly about  
                    the limits of our own or others' present awareness of Christ,  
                                    sense of contact with him,  
                                    or progress in the faith,  
but trust in your goodwill and love,  
and encourage each other to growth in wholeness,  
                    through Jesus Christ, your Salvation,  
                            who will not break a bruised reed,  
                            or snuff out a smouldering wick,  
                            but will bring the triumph of righteousness  
                                    to all humankind who will accept him.  
  Amen.

On Matt. 12.22-32

Mark 3.20-30

Luke 11.14-26

God of saving power and goodness,  
we thank you that Jesus has overcome all the powers of evil.  
Grant us to trust in his victory,  
            and to receive it in our lives,  
                    that we may be delivered from evil,  
                    and share your joy  
                            through the same Jesus Christ our rescuer.  
                                    Amen.

On Matt. 12.22-32  
Mark 3.20-30  
Luke 11.14-26

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we rejoice that you have bound the devil,  
    winning the decisive victory over evil in all its forms.  
You break the chains that bind us under oppression to various forms of evil;  
    the sins and addictions from which we cannot free ourselves,  
    the pride and selfishness that blind us to your truth,  
    the fears that make us dumb in the face of tyranny, injustice,  
        and forms of wickedness that our friends and society condone.  
You set people free from mental confusion, sickness, anguish and paralysis,  
    including that which can result from occult practices and other mistakes and sins.  
Give us the confidence that we share now in the fruits of your victory,  
    and will finally participate in its full triumph, the destruction of all evil.  
So may we struggle steadfastly in the power of your Spirit against all wrong,  
    all that damages and destroys people,  
    all that disfigures and wrecks the life, beauty or flourishing of your creation,  
    all that blinds us to your goodness  
    and silences our praise of you.  
We ask this for your love and glory's sake.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.22-32  
Mark 3.20-30  
Luke 11.14-26

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we rejoice that you have won the decisive victory over evil,  
    and bound its power and all that condemns humanity to final destruction.  
Give us the confidence that we shall finally share in the full results of your victory.  
So may we struggle steadfastly in the power of your Spirit against all wrong,  
    in ourselves and outside us,  
    that destroys people and ruins your creation.  
We ask this for your love and glory's sake.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.22-32  
Mark 3.20-30  
Luke 11.14-26

God our Father,  
preserve us from calling evil good and good evil,  
    and from selfish and obstinate arrogance  
        that can fix us irrevocably in that rejection of your Holy Spirit,  
        and leave us unable to repent and find forgiveness.  
May we live by humble gratitude and trust in you as the God of love and goodness,  
    who seeks the good of all creation,  
    and reaches out to forgive, to heal, to free from all evil,  
        and to bring to fullness of life,  
        through your Son and your Spirit.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.33-37  
Luke 6.43-46

God our Father,  
transform us, we pray, through the Spirit of your Son,  
that we may be conformed to your goodness  
and bring forth fruits of goodness in all we think and say and do.  
This we ask through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.36-37

God of truth and love,  
Set the guard of your Holy Spirit, we pray, on our mouths,  
that our words may be helpful,  
building people up,  
not leading them astray or destroying lives  
by malice or carelessness,  
by lies  
or by a callous or uncaring statement of facts outside love's context.  
So forgive us and deliver us from the idle words  
that condemn and rot the life of their speakers and hearers,  
that we may come through your judgement  
to rejoice with you and through you,  
in your kingdom of love, righteousness and truth,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen

On Matt. 12.38-42  
Luke 11.29-32  
Mark 8.11-12

Faithful God,  
enable us, we pray, to trust in you through Jesus Christ,  
relying on his death and resurrection for us,  
and the wisdom and truth of his message.  
So may we ever turn to you and away from all evil,  
and grow in wholeness through your love  
without the need to seek miraculous signs to confirm our faith.  
We ask for Jesus' sake.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.38-42  
Luke 11.29-32  
Mark 8.11-12

God of love,  
you call us in Christ to grow to maturity as your children,  
to find true freedom by trusting you and sharing your love.  
Forgive our need for constant reassurance,  
for miraculous proofs or worldly success  
to coddle us and cushion us from the need to mature.  
Help us to accept the pains of growing up in faith,  
to trust you in times of bewilderment, uncertainty, suffering, and failure,  
in times of dryness and dullness,  
as Jesus trusted you even to the cross and grave,  
and so came to the glory of the resurrection.  
Amen.

On Matt 12.38-40  
[Luke 11.29-32]  
[Mark 8.11-12]

God of all power and love,  
you call people to loving trust in you and your goodness.  
Forgive us for looking for a sign,  
    for a proof that would take away our need for trust and commitment to you  
    and remove the challenge and pain of your call  
        by giving us a reassurance  
            that would remove our need to grow to maturity with you.

Help us to be content with the sign of the prophet Jonah,  
✠ the sign of bare preaching,  
    the proclamation of your nature, holy will and judgement,  
    which convicts us of our sin,  
        • our rebellion against you,  
        • our selfish pride and greed, our love of power, wealth, ease and luxury,  
        • and our cruel lack of concern for the poor and weak,  
and which calls us to repentant trust in you and humble seeking of your will;  
✠ and the sign of the three days under the power of death,  
    ♥ of your great love  
        which in your Son accepted to bear the results of our rebellion,  
        even to dying and being buried for us  
            as rebellious Jonah was buried in the sea monster,  
    ♥ of your call to suffer for you,  
    ♥ of discipline for your people to make us grow in obedience,  
    ♥ and of your gift of new life from the dead in which we can serve you.

Teach us to see in your Son, Jesus Christ, and his good news,  
    the fulfilment of the sign of Jonah,  
    and the only saving sign that you give us or that we need.

Thank you  
    that Christ proclaimed your righteousness in word and deed,  
    that he took on himself the judgement and pain of human disobedience in his death  
        and was in the grave until the third day,  
    that he has suffered for us and with us to bring us to new life,  
    and that his good news calls us to trust and growth in your kingdom  
        by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Deliver us by your good news from all evil and unfaithfulness  
    to become a generation of your true children  
        living according to your will in faith, hope and love,  
        through the same Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit.  
            Amen.



On Matt 12.41-42  
Luke 11.29-32

Almighty God, creator of all humankind, God of truth and humility,  
your Son, Jesus Christ, gave as his examples of obedient hearers of your word  
and of true repentance  
the heathen people of the cruel imperial city of Nineveh,  
who repented at the preaching of Jonah,  
and his example of true seeking of Divine wisdom was the pagan Queen of Sheba,  
who came from the ends of the earth, far from your land and people,  
to hear Solomon's wisdom.  
Keep us, who have heard the message of your Son,  
and count ourselves members of your people, his church,  
from all pride, complacency and presumption.  
May we, in humility, awe and trust,  
truly turn to you in sorrow for our faults, and receive your gift of new life.  
Enable us to seek your wisdom with effort and persistence,  
that we may not be condemned at the judgement,  
but enter into the joy of your kingdom  
through your Word, Jesus the Messiah,  
our true prophet, ruler and wisdom.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.43-45  
Luke 11.24.26

God our Father,  
we praise you for all your goodness and blessings to us:  
you have given us life and knowledge of yourself;  
you have protected and rescued us from evils, dangers and troubles;  
you have called us to relate to you in grateful love and trust.  
May we respond to you in faith and love,  
allowing your Spirit to live and rule fully in our hearts,  
lest, if we refuse you,  
we fall into the grip of worse evils than any we have known before,  
and our personalities and societies sink into sins, chaos, and self destruction  
in the madness of pride and folly, hatred, greed and lusts.  
We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
who overcame evil  
and sent your Spirit into our hearts  
to unite us with you as your children and your people.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.46-50  
Mark 3.31-35  
Luke 8.19-21

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we praise you that, by word and action,  
    you have revealed to us the will of your Father in heaven.  
Enable us to do that will,  
    by hearing your gospel  
    and responding in grateful trust and love.  
So make us your brothers and sisters, children of God through you,  
    and, by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
    help us to present you to the world as Lord and Saviour  
    by the witness of our words and lives.  
We ask this for your love's sake.  
Amen.

On Matt. 12.46-50  
Mark 3.31-35  
Luke 8.19-21

Lord Jesus Christ,  
keep us from relying on any indirect relationship to you and God our Father.  
Let us not depend on coming from a Christian home,  
    a Christian family  
    or a so called Christian society.  
Let us not trust in mere membership of a church.  
Rather help us to obey the Father's will  
    by trusting him through you in grateful love,  
    and by seeking the good of our fellow human beings  
        according to his will revealed in you.  
So may we be your sisters and brothers by the Holy Spirit,  
    sharers in the life of the Holy Trinity  
    as children of your Father in heaven, adopted through you.  
For your love's sake we ask it.  
Amen.